

Show, Not Tell: A Narrative Exploration

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Michele Whitehair

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Andrea Wolfe

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

May 2017

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2017

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Abstract

Writing a novel is more than having characters do something and creating a story arc. A novel also entails developing the characters themselves, and making sure the reader knows why the character is doing what they are doing. An easier way to write a novel would be to instruct the reader that the character has a certain attribute or is a certain way. This can sometimes lead to feelings of confusion and resentment from the reader, who feels led blindly to a certain conclusion or feeling about a character. In the ensuing pages, I attempt to show that each character has certain attributes, allowing the reader to come to their own conclusions and feelings. This is not a full novel. Instead, it is the major plot points that would lead to character development, followed by explanations of what each plot point should have shown the reader.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Wolfe for advising me through this project. Her help in identifying trouble spots throughout my manuscript and her patience as we went through numerous drafts greatly helped me put together a project I am proud of.

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Process Analysis

When I first came up with an idea for my Honors thesis, I thought I wanted to write a novel. My goal was to ensure that my novel did not tell the reader how to feel about the characters and instead that it led them to feel certain ways about characters. Reading other fiction novels gave me the idea for my thesis because at times I have felt as though an author was telling me how to feel about and react toward the characters, without giving me reasons why. The example of this that sticks out most in my mind is the book, "The Snow Walker," by Catherine Fisher. A few times throughout the novel, the main character would say she was going to do something that was rebellious or brave and the other characters would react basically by saying, "Well, of course you are going to do that because you're so brave." This bothered me because I had not been made aware that she was extraordinarily brave before the other characters said she was. I was confused. What was their basis for knowing that "of course" she was going to do each brave thing? I felt that, throughout the novel, she had never proven herself to be especially brave. She simply reacted to the circumstances around her and not in any way that made me revere her. The feeling that I were being told almost blindly to feel a certain way about a character annoyed me because I don't like being told to do something or react in a certain way without being first given a clear reason why. I'll respect this character or fear that character, etc., but only if the author shows me why they are respectable or worthy of fear. This is the main basis for my thesis. I wanted to show the reader, not tell them, to respect this character or fear that one and lead them instead of tell them.

Because of time restraints, though, I ultimately chose to write out the main plot points of a novel fully fleshing out those events that would truly help illustrate the characters and make them real for the reader and leaving out parts that did not necessarily lead to significant character

development instead of composing an entire novel. I ended up writing out 24 main character-developing plot points of a novel. After each plot point, I wrote a summary of what it is that I wanted the reader to take away about each of the characters from that part. These summaries are a major part of my thesis because they provide the explanation of what I wanted to show the reader about each character. For example, I wanted to show that the prince character is lonely, so in his parts I included a lot of his own thoughts. I wrote in the summary how I wanted the inclusion of these thoughts throughout his normal conversations to show how he lived primarily inside his own head. In a similar way, I summarized how I wanted the reader to feel about the other characters or react to them through the plot summaries.

As a journalist, I have been taught to develop a person's character in a feature piece. Instead of telling the reader that the person is a giver or generous, you show them volunteering every weekend or donating their money, for example. The writer is not supposed to write that a scene was tragic. Instead, they are supposed to show how the scene was dangerous and tragic by showing what people were doing and how they were reacting. I wanted to practice this, but with a twist. I wanted to add a challenge for myself, where I not only showed the character as one thing or another, but also came up with the character themselves. I wanted to look into developing a character through a lens other than that of a journalist writing an article or a feature piece about someone, and I wanted to show that it is possible to create a character, and an emotional reaction from the reader, without telling the reader how to feel.

This project was a challenge for me. Multiple times while I wrote it, I almost wrote that a character was something (i.e. Armat was tired), which would have been telling and not showing. I had to train myself to not write that. Instead of telling the reader that Armat was tired, I had to show him stumbling as he walked, his eyes drooping, and his face ashen. I faced the same

challenge with all the characters. It was a challenge to make sure that I was showing enough information to lead the reader into feeling the way about the character that I wanted them to without inundating them with too much information. At first, when I sent a draft of my work to Dr. Wolfe, she gave many suggestions of areas where I could show instead of tell how a character was feeling, or why they were doing something. I had to make a conscious effort the whole time I was writing to make sure that I was not telling the reader what was going on, and instead that I was showing them. I was not always successful in my goal of showing and not telling. There are many times throughout the draft that the plot points are told and not shown, but I did my best throughout to revise each section in order to show the characteristics of each character.

In this way, I created a thesis project that I think explores the idea of showing instead of telling. It is a much longer manuscript than it would have been had I allowed myself to tell the reader, but this way allows the reader the ability and the freedom to decide for his or herself how they want to feel about the characters and their actions. In the future, I hope to finish my novel fully and make sure that I show the reader what is happening with each character so they do not feel confused or instructed to feel a certain way about the novel or characters. Instead, I hope they will feel the freedom to make their own judgments.

Show, Not Tell: A Narrative Exploration

They've officially done it. They finally made me leave.

My mother and father have three children, all girls. Then my mom goes and gets pregnant again and my dad spends all the coin they have to pay three gypsies to bless the baby.

He wanted a boy.

He needed a boy.

He got a girl, even after three shamans and all the medicine and herbal remedies he could shove down my mom's throat.

And he blamed me every day of my life for it.

"The curse" is what he called me. Like it was my fault. I didn't choose to be born a girl, just like I didn't choose to be born into such a family as mine.

He wouldn't speak to me, or even look at me really, until I turned 12. He didn't even teach me my letters or numbers. My sisters did, but he got them in trouble when he found out, so they had to sneak it. When I turned 12, he started trying to find a husband for me, but it's pretty hard to find a husband for a curse, so that wasn't going too well for him either. More's the curse for me. Then, yesterday, I finally had it. He had been working me nonstop in the fields since I could hold a pitchfork, and he wouldn't let me have a break. It's like he thought if I worked hard enough at jobs meant for men, that I would become one.

He lets his slaves have breaks, but not me. I was collecting the wheat, but the sun was so strong and it was my monthly time. I started to feel like I would faint, and begged him for a break, or even some water. But he refused. I finally quit, and last night I ran away. I was just going to sleep in the woods and keep walking tomorrow, but I found this cottage abandoned, so I will stay here tonight. I found a lantern and lit it.

The cottage is small, but cozy. There is a large fireplace in what was the sitting room, and a small loft just above, which I can get to with a small ladder. The kitchen is stocked with jars of dried apples and deer meat by the looks of it.

The cottage is obviously abandoned, though recently. The storm a few weeks ago blew open the shutters, so there is a fine layer of dust everywhere that is undisturbed by anyone or anything, somehow. I ate some of the meat and the apples. They didn't have much flavor, but tasted good. My first taste of freedom, as it were.

I wonder what happened to the people who used to live here.

I fear what my father will do to my sisters when he finds out I'm not there, but I can't live there anymore.

I'm probably going to die up here, once the food is gone. I don't know what I'm going to do to make a living. I guess I'll find out tomorrow, when I can look around this old place.

If I do die, this journal is for whoever finds me, so they might know why I did what I did.

(Next Day)

This place is amazing!

There are fields just a little farther up the hill. They are not planted, so they must belong to this cottage and whoever used to live here. I can farm here! There is also a nice barn for livestock if I want some. It will take some work, but I might survive here.

I found some seeds in the barn and I planted them today. It is a little late in the season, but I have always been good with plants, so maybe I can make it work.

I ate some more of the deer meat and apples, and did some more exploring of the cottage. I found a door that led to a pretty well-stocked cellar. Whoever lived here must not have meant to leave.

For that, I am grateful, as it means I will survive for at least a little longer. I hope the wheat grows in time, so I can have some money for food this winter. We will see.

I snuck down to see my sisters today. The oldest two wouldn't even come close to me, and they ordered Emura to follow their lead. They said if I came into the cottage, that they would call father. Emura's always liked me the most out of all of us, though, and snuck outside to see me for a little bit. I am so lucky to have her.

"Where were you?" She asked me. I think she meant to seem mad, but she just looked relieved.

"I found a cottage just up the hill last night and I'm going to live there and farm it all by myself,"

I said with more confidence than I feel.

"Can I come visit you sometime?" she asked.

"Only if mother and father and the girls don't know about it," I said. I worry about Emura. She is too shy to stick up for herself, and I worry about her the most now that I am gone. Without me there, I fear father will make her do all of the work. He didn't like it that she talked to me.

Father rarely spoke to me as we grew up. When he did, he would not look me in the eye, and he instructed mother and my sisters to do the same. Emura, though, was different. She talked kindly to me from the start, and snuck food to me when father demanded I go to bed without food. I fear for her now that I am gone.

I gave her directions to the cottage and sent her inside before they thought to come looking for her, or brought father in from the field, and then I went back to my cottage to check on the wheat. It looks like it might rain tonight, so I decided to come inside and start tidying up the cottage.

(Years later...)

I can't believe I found this journal again! I thought I had lost it when I was going through all of the wonderful things I found in this cottage that has become my own. But here it is! It's funny to see how scared and young I was then, and how much I have changed these past two years.

I guess I should update this journal to reflect that I am, in fact, not dead. I am more alive than I have ever felt.

I still farm wheat, and have added to my farm some cattle and sheep. The barn was in need of many more repairs than I first thought so the cattle and sheep have only been here for about a year. The roof had a rather large leak, and one of the walls had to be rebuilt, but it is well stocked now with hay for the animals.

I bought them with money I got from selling wheat at the market in town. That is a story in itself.

I knew I couldn't sell it myself. Everyone in town still sees me as a curse, since Father would constantly tell anyone who would listen that I was a curse on his family and a curse on this town.

It did not help that right after I was born, there was a drought, which caused a famine. Soon, everyone blamed me for the bad weather and their bad luck. To make things worse, ever since I left the farm, the harvest has barely been enough for them to survive on. Emura says Father tells the people in town that I left a curse on the farm when I left because I was angry.

Emura visited me one day and offered to add my wheat to mother and father's and divide out the money. She is the one who takes the loads to the market, so nobody else in the family is any the wiser about our arrangement. She takes a huge risk every time she does this because father would kill her if he knew she was helping me out.

"He thinks you are dead, and says it is for the best," she told me one day. I don't know what to say about that, and take solace in the fact that if they think I am dead, they will not come looking for me and will not continue to curse my name.

Mother and father's farm is struggling and mine is flourishing. I try to give Emura money to help them out, but she says no. She is too proud.

"They made this problem. They can fix it," she says. She has become stubborn, and I am all the more grateful for it. I do not fear for her as much anymore because I can imagine her sticking up for herself in front of father. Every time she comes to pick up a load, I give her food and wool from the sheep. She is grateful, because she can sell the wool and make a little money for herself. She wants to leave like I did, but she is going to be smarter about it, she says.

The farm is flourishing! I grow mostly wheat, but also potatoes and corn to feed myself. The cows make a lot of milk, and the sheep grow so much wool I can hardly keep up with it all. I weave clothes out of the wool for Emura to take to the market, too.

I do get a little lonely here most days, though. I can't go into the town to see people, and I have no friends. Nobody wanted to take the risk of talking to a cursed one, and even though it makes me mad, I can't really blame them for the rumors my dad spread about me. I wish I could go down, even in disguise, but I am afraid they would know me and I would be hurt. They were really afraid of me before I left. (1)

...

Armat was drunk again, and trying hard not to show it. It was not going well. He leaned on the doorpost of the tavern to catch his balance and wait for the world to stop spinning. When it finally did, he mustered the courage to walk the rest of the way into the half-filled room and up to the bar.

Here we go again, he thought to himself. One more speech to these brainwashed townspeople all for nothing. Five towns in this godforsaken territory and all I have to show for it is an eye thrice

blackened. Though he had never tried his recruitment speech with this much beer in him, he thought with a smile. Maybe that's the key.

It was around dinnertime, and the tavern soon filled with townspeople and farmers, tired from a long day's work. The tavern, the Lonely Whisper, transformed right in front of Armat's eyes from a quiet inn into a boisterous bar as people began shouting for their drink or their dinner.

I love small towns, Armat thought. Everyone knows each other, and they always have more spirit. The tavern owner, obviously used to this type of abuse, yelled along with his customers as he gave them their food and served them their drinks.

Armat waited until food and drink had been served and the tavern had quieted down as people hungrily settled down to their meals before taking one last drink of his beer and standing up.

"Are you tired of the king's unruly tax, and his evil enforcers?" He yelled to the masses.

"Sit down!" was the heavily accented reply from someone at the back of the room.

"I come from far away, up in the capital, to tell you that we are done with this king and the throne he does not deserve to sit on." Armat continued, unbothered by the comment. He was used to the angry responses. At least these people seemed to be paying attention and slightly interested in what he had to say. "Join me and my army, and together we will overthrow the evil king and take the kingdom back for ourselves! All we require is that you be able of body and sound of mind, and that you leave with me in three days for the capital." He held up three fingers.

"And then what?" came the same voice from before. "Will you make all of us kings and queens in our own rights? I, for myself and my family, would like to own this town." The man seemed a touch drunk, but Armat could hardly talk.

A murmur of agreement and laughter went through the crowd as the man spoke.

"When the king and his descendants are dead, the kingdom will be back in the power of the people, good sir. We will put in place a new king who will truly care about his subjects," Armat said, trying to remain calm. There were a lot of people not really agreeing with him. He looked at the door, trying to decide if he could make it before they got to him.

"A new king to take even more of our hard-earned coin and all our children, you mean," another voice replied.

"Not at all!" The crowd was starting to get restless. "We in the capital, like you all here, are tired of losing our sons to wars we don't know about, never to hear from them again, and losing all our money to pay for lavish dinners for the king and his friends. We want to do something about it, and end his tyranny for good!"

"Just let us eat!" the first voice said. "We work hard day in and day out to barely make a living. We don't have the energy or the time to fight a losing battle!" The speaker stood up and revealed himself to be a tall, barrel-chested man with arms the size of Armat's head. Armat began to inch himself toward the door as more people started to stand. "Stop trying to get our hopes up for no good."

"What's your name, friend?" Armat asked the man, trying to buy himself some time.

"Porlin, and I am not a friend," the man said, striding toward Armat. "You need to leave us, and take your crazy ideas with you. We don't need these fantasies distracting us from our work. We survive together here, and we don't need you people filling our head with impossible things." He had now reached the bar and, grabbing Armat, began walking to the door. Armat was thrown into the dirty streets, and the door closed before he could say another word.

He inched himself up, still unsteady on his feet, and sat against the door. He heard some angry whispers coming from right outside the bar near Armat.

"Where were you?" a male voice, the tavern owner's, asked.

"It won't happen again, I promise," a shy female voice said.

"You were with that sister of yours again, weren't you?" the tavern owner asked.

"No!" the female voice was getting angry.

"I keep telling you that she's bad for you. If anybody catches you two together, they'll call you cursed too, and that'll be the end of you," the tavern owner's voice had a sense of fatherly concern in him.

"She needs me. She lives all alone up there, and nobody else even knows she's alive! How can anybody live like that?"

"She understands her fate. She was the curse upon the town. We are all the better now that she is gone. We know the truth, but they don't need to be bothered by it," the tavern owner said.

"If only they knew that half their food and clothing came from the one they cursed!" the female voice spat out. "Then imagine what they would do!"

"They would refuse to believe it, like your parents refused to believe that the reason their farm failed was because she left, not because of some silly curse that doesn't exist," the voices were walking away, and Armat snuck around the building to listen in.

"If only it weren't for her eyes! Then she could come back to town and start all over again!" the female voice said.

"But she has them, and you and I both know she and all of us down here are better off with nobody being any the wiser about her," the tavern owner said. The door to the tavern's kitchen opened, allowing the various noises of the kitchen and some music from the bar, into the quiet nighttime air. Then the door closed, and Armat was once again surrounded by the darkness, and in the company of only his thoughts.

But his thoughts were alive with possibilities. He needed to talk to that girl. But how? Another confrontation with the tavern owner didn't seem like a good idea, so he decided to wait until she went home. Plus, sitting down seemed like a good way to make the world stop spinning.

A few hours later, just when he was beginning to give up, the door around the corner creaked open and Armat heard small footsteps. Not wanting to scare her, Armat slowly stood up quickly and stood under the light. She saw him, gave a small smile and began walking home. (2)

...

Heveni, there's someone here to see you!" Emura shouted. I had watched her come up the hill, being followed by a strange man in dark clothing. As they got closer, she looked her usual cheery self. He looked like he had rolled in the dirt a few times.

As a rule, I don't trust strangers, but in truth I haven't seen anyone other than Emura in over two years. If she trusts him, though, he must be okay. I owe her that much, at least.

"Heveni! I know you're home! Come out and greet us like is proper." Emura has become much braver. That makes me happy. I went outside to greet my guests. Up close, the strange man not only looked like he had rolled in dirt; he smelled like it. What was Emura thinking?

"This man-"

"Armat," the strange man said with a smile. "My name is Armat."

"Armat," Emura corrected herself with a silencing look toward Armat. "says you have some special magic in you! Isn't that exciting?" she was almost yelling.

"What are you talking about?"

"She's not explaining too well," the man called Armat said. "Ever since I told her, she can hardly speak a sentence. The entire walk up here she kept looking at me like she wanted to say something, but she never did. She just smiled and looked away."

"Well, you speak for her then," I said. I was getting a little impatient. "It's harvest time and I need to get back to the fields."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about, actually," he said. "I believe you are a key part of the prophecy to rid this kingdom of the king and his family."

The look I gave him silenced him instantly, and I turned to Emura.

"It's a perfect day for harvesting and you bring this man who so clearly needs help to tell me fairy stories?"

"No, wait! He can explain more, if you'll just listen. Can we go inside? It's hot, and I'm sure you could use a break anyway."

Maybe it's not the best thing that Emura seems to have found the courage to talk back.

"I can, and I am sorry. I am just a little taken aback. I promise to explain if you will just give me some more time," Armat said. I sighed, invited them inside and served some lemon water. It was my specialty, as my lemons were some of the best fruit in the area. They were the best sellers at market. Once they were settled, I looked to Armat to start speaking.

"I guess I should start from the beginning," he said. "I come from the capital, over 50 leagues to the east. I belong to a group called the Olliten. The first with the Hiltre were the original guardians of the Prophecy, and through the years it was passed down until it came to us."

"The Prophecy tells that in a time of great suffering by the kingdom, a Pleintra will rise up and defeat Hiltre once and for all and take the kingdom back from the Rintrock, who are the king and his family."

"What does this have to do with me?"

"The Prophecy says the Pleintra will be rejected by all who know them. They will have the tinelis in abundance, though no knowledge about it."

"What is the tinelis?" I asked.

"It is the most powerful form of magic ever to be given to a human. It is also the only form of magic to be bestowed upon a person at birth."

"OK. But who are the Hiltre, then?"

"What is the Hiltre, my dear. It is a spoken magic, the opposite of yours. It is a dirty, vile form of magic that has been used by evil men to gain power they do not deserve."

"There is just one problem to your theory, then, Mr. Armat. I have never heard of any tinelis, and I can guarantee you that I do not have it. I wish you luck in finding your truly prophesied one, but I cannot be it. Magic does not exist. I will thank you kindly now to leave my sister and me in peace." I gave Emura a huge glare.

"The Pleintra was to be rejected as a curse by those who should have shown them love. Your sister said your father did everything to expect a boy, but instead you were born. She said he cursed every step you took."

"True, but I do not have any magic, and I do not particularly appreciate my secrets being shared with strangers," I said with a pointed look toward Emura. I turned my head a little, though, when he mentioned being rejected as a curse. That sounded a little familiar.

"But he said something else, too. Go on," Emura said to us.

"Tinelis, before it is consciously unleashed by a person who possesses it, can manifest itself in many different ways. For example, this soil is hard and dry, and yet your farm and your animals flourish. How do you explain that?"

He had a point, drat him. It was a fact I had troubled over somewhat, though I tried to simply be happy with those blessings I had.

"One way to see for sure," Armat began distractedly and trotted outside. When he came back inside not one minute later, he held one of my lemon tree saplings.

"What are you doing with that? It's going to die!"

"Make it grow," Armat said, looking at me in the eyes.

"How? I don't know what you are talking about!"

"Think in your mind that you want it to grow."

"If this doesn't work, you go outside and replant that right this second!" Why was I trusting this man? It could be that his Prophecy made more than a little bit of sense. Mostly I think he was the first person to know the story of my birth and not deem me a curse on the town. Whatever the reason, I focused on the little sapling and thought of the lemon tree it would become, and how I wanted it to grow.

It grew. A little at first, but then there was a new leaf, green and shiny. Then another one, and then another one.

"Stop wanting it to grow, before it grows out the windows," Armat said with a smile. I obeyed.

"Go out and replant that, please, and leave me alone for a bit."

"Of course," he said with a bow as he walked out the door.

I guess I have magic now. (3)

...

Today was our first day on the road. I am excited and very scared. If Armat is telling the truth, which I believe that he is, I do not know what to think. All I can think of, though, is that he does not think I am a curse, and for that I am very grateful. Even if he is lying, or I am not the Pleintra he so believes I am, this could be my chance to start a new life.

Anyway, our trip today was pretty uneventful. We got started before the sun's arms were in the sky. We went to the top of my hill and then down the other side and then started our journey to the capital in the west.

It is 50 leagues, and Armat wants to make it there as quickly as possible. He says it should take about a fortnight, if we are lucky and walk fast. He seemed wary this morning, and kept looking behind us.

I asked what he was looking for.

"The arms of the kingdom are far-reaching, and I do not believe my presence here went unnoticed. I worry that the king may have sent some of his creatures to rid himself of us," he said.

After hearing that, I found myself looking behind me at every sound. We are well shielded, though, by this forest we are in. It is thick with trees still green, though it nears fall with every passing day. It is calm as we walk through, with only the faint rustle of the leaves on the wind. We startled a small herd of deer once, and then a rabbit that Armat snagged for our dinner. For all his worrying, we stopped for a while to rest and eat around midday, and then continued on. Armat wanted to be out of the forest by nightfall. We are camped on the edge of the forest right where it meets the plains that are to be our next part of the journey.

Today was a long day and I am utterly exhausted. Armat keeps an excruciating pace and I worry that I won't be able to keep up for long. He says we covered three leagues today. I do not know about that, but Already, I feel blisters on my feet and my leg muscles are wholly unused to walking for so long. Even as I sit by the fire, I struggle to stay awake. Armat said since we have seen no living thing other than the deer and rabbit, we do not need to keep a watch, so both of us can sleep the whole night.

(Next day)

If there was any doubt in my mind that Armat was telling the truth, it is now gone. I fought monsters today! And we won!

I should start from the beginning.

Armat shook me awake early in the morning, so we could break camp and start back on our journey. Neither Armat nor I is very awake in the mornings so we ate in silence and got ready in silence and then were on our way.

The plains were even quieter than the forest, and we saw not one living thing the entire morning.

Armat seemed doubly worried now, and the silence surrounding us seemed to compound that.

We didn't even stop for lunch, and instead, Armat doled out some of the hard bread he had packed for the road and some hard cheese, and we ate as we walked.

Just after midday, when the sun was supposed to be high in the sky, clouds began to gather and block it out. They moved quicker than I have ever seen them, and before long the sky was black and threatening. Armat stopped so fast I almost ran right into his back.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"I do not know, but this sky is not natural."

"What do we do?" As I said the last word, a bright flash of lightning struck the ground not 20 yards in front of us. A puff of smoke rose slowly from the spot, and a small army of darker shadows formed behind that.

Armat slowly unsheathed his sword and held it at the ready.

"Stay behind me. If they get past me, don't look them in the eye or you will die. Their nose is a soft spot. Hit that and they will run from you. Run back into the forest. They can't smell or see

very well, so you may yet be able to escape.” He spoke quickly and handed me a small knife he had tucked in the folds of his tunic.

“I don’t know what to do with that!” I told him. The smoke was almost completely gone, now and from it rose five medium-sized beasts.

They could have passed as children from far away, but up close they were covered in a scaly skin a dark blue that was almost black. Their eyes were a sick yellow color, and I looked away quickly. They walked on two legs, well-muscled and powerful, because their fingers ended in claws that looked to be made of some type of metal.

Armat stood just in front of me, poised to fight, and I readied myself as best as I could. Closer they came, slowly at first, as if they were getting used to legs, and then quicker, until they were running.

The first one came at Armat, and he took it down in one swing of his sword. Black blood sprayed out of the wound. Armat had cut it in the stomach. A foul odor permeated the scene, but the creature went down writhing in pain.

The other four attacked together. Armat was obviously a skilled fighter. For a while, it looked as though neither side was making any progress. Armat would earn a little blood off one of the creatures and then one of them would force him to retreat a little bit.

Armat began to slowly lose ground.

“Run! Into the forest,” he yelled. “Hurry!”

I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t leave him out here to die like that. That is when I had an idea. If I made the lemon tree grow, maybe I could make the creatures go away. I ran back a few yards from the fight, closed my eyes tightly against the scene before me and focused against the noise.

There was a lot more going on this time, but I heard Armat let out a little yell and doubled my efforts.

I thought of the monsters falling to the ground, dead. Nothing seemed to be happening.

"It doesn't work to kill things!" Armat yelled to me in between breaths. "You have to think of something else."

I could tell from his raspy voice that he was getting tired and I tried to think of something that might work. I remembered Emura when she was little more than three and got stuck in some mud. She had cried and cried and after we pulled her out she had hugged me for a long time. I thought it was weird that that thought should come to mind at such a time as this, but then I thought, *Maybe that could work*. I thought of the earth opening up underneath the monsters so that they would get stuck in the mud and be unable to move.

I closed my eyes and tried to focus on that thought. Nothing seemed to be happening at first, but then Armat made a confused sound. I opened my eyes and, to my amazement, it worked! Well, it had kind of worked, I should say. The monsters were getting partially stuck in small mud puddles that seemed to have popped up from nowhere. There were only a few muddy areas, but the monsters did not seem to have the ability to avoid them and they slowly became more and more stuck in the mud. Slowly they fell down, one by one, and Armat was able to cut them down easily.

After Armat had killed the last one, he was breathing heavily and he stumbled out of the way of the last monster's death throes.

"Thank you for that. I assume the mud was you," he said, leaning on his sword and breathing heavilt.

"It was. I thought of them being a lot bigger than that and swallowing the monsters, but that didn't happen."

"That worked well enough to slow them down. We should get going, but first we need to drag the bodies into the forest so that they do not attract attention from anyone passing by."

"Can we touch them?"

"They are only poisonous when they are alive, but only touch the ones I say are dead, just in case."

"OK." Armat walked up to the first monster and touched it with the tip of his sword three times.

When nothing happened, he motioned to me to drag it to the forest. They were scaly, covered in a weird skin pattern that was very rough to the touch. They were also heavy! It took all of my strength to drag the first one. I also found that I was very tired, but Armat and I somehow were able to drag each of the bodies into the forest far enough to be safe from anyone noticing.

Then we continued walking, quicker than before. The monsters seemed to have brought back a little of our energy back, though both of us were more tired than ever. While we walked, Armat talked to me.

"Those were juneli and they are said to have been made extinct four generations ago, though that is apparently not the truth," he said. "You did very well today. How did you think of doing that?"

"I remembered when Emura was younger and she got stuck in the mud and we almost lost her. Since it didn't work to wish for them to be dead, I thought I might be able to slow them down that way for you."

"It was a very good idea, and if you had not thought of it, both of us would probably be dead. I thank you."

"Why couldn't I just wish for them to be dead?"

"The Illenera is a creating magic. That means you can only make things happen, not take them away."

"Oh, I think that makes sense."

"I should have told you that earlier. I do not know very much about the Illenera, but I should have told you that. That is my fault and it almost cost us everything."

"We're alive, though. I think that means something," I reminded him.

"This is true." We fell into a comfortable, though tired, silence, filled only with the sounds of our feet on the ground. Thankfully, we did stop early tonight because both of us were struggling to keep walking. I am very tired, and think I will go to sleep now. (4)

...

Armat was beginning to worry about Heveni. Though she tried to hide it, he could tell that she was struggling to keep up with him. She had been upbeat at first, grateful to be away from the town that had been so evil to her all her life.

That spark had begun to dim after even the first day. Armat understood, though. The road was hard, and even he was struggling to maintain the pace he had set.

Then, when she had helped him to kill the juneli, she had regained most of that spark back and maybe even a little bit more than she had when they had left. She had walked with her head held higher than he had ever seen, and there was a confident spark in her eye. She was also talking again. She had talked about it for three days straight, reliving the moment when she had known exactly what she had to do.

Now, though, it had been a week since the battle, and she looked worse for the time. She tried to hide it. She still kept her watch every night, which they started after the battle with the juneli, but where before she had talked on the road, now she was mostly silent and reserved. She no longer

talked except for short answers to any questions he had, and kept her head down, mouth set in a grim line of determination. The spark also appeared to have left.

How he wished they could afford to slow down even a little! Then she could get the rest she so desperately needed, and deserved.

"I think we are far enough away from prying ears that I can tell you the story of your magic,"

Armat told Heveni one night over the fire. She instantly perked up at that, he noticed.

Curiosity, always the last thought to leave the mind, he thought with an inward smile and began the story. (5)

...

Armat is a wonderful storyteller. He told me today the story of the magic he says that I have inside me. I still do not know if I believe him or not, but he said that the magic is something that is learned. It is either inside you or it is not, he says, and he says it is in me. He has not steered me wrong yet. I will write the story here so that I do not forget it.

Many years ago, before Plensiv had been created, a group of wanderers came to the land. Their exact number is lost now. Some say there were only two, some say five and one story even claims a group of ten or more descended upon the land. They were strangers from lands across the many seas and they spoke a language vastly alien to that of the land at the time. The people in the small towns that would become parts of Plensiv treated them as strangers at first.

They had reason to be wary of newcomers, since they believed strangers had cursed the land and created the drought and famines that had ravaged the land at the time. Most of the people had perished from either the sickness or the hunger. Nobody was healthy and food had been scarce for two generations at least.

“My ancestors lived in the land just north of here, where the wanderers landed. They were farmers, never rich, but they made a living,” he said. Until this point, Armat’s voice had been quiet. He spoke steadily, without hesitation, well-practiced, it seemed, at telling this story.

One man, though, brought the strangers into his home and fed them. He asked them where they had come from and what their intentions were in this land. They told him they came to fix the people’s problems and create a society rich and bountiful. They said they were the Sigle people, from a land that is now lost to memory.

The man asked how they intended to fix the famine when no amount of prayer or offering to the gods had produced even a drop of rain. He had lost his wife and two of his sons because of the famine, and himself had lost all hope and joy. He lived on the outskirts of his town, waiting to die so he might join his loved ones. He had sent his son to live with his brother in the town, he was so torn with grief over his losses.

The Sigle said they had a magic that would make the crops bountiful and the pigs fat. The man thought they were mad! He stood up and yelled at them to leave his house immediately.

At this, Armat stood up and threw his hands in the air. From the other side of the fire, he himself looked mad. He began pacing around the campfire, waving his hands in the air. Suddenly, he stopped and turned to look at me with a smile.

As the Sigle stood up to leave the man’s house, he opened the door, still yelling at them. “How dare you come into my house and say this famine will be cured with a little magic! My family is dead because of it! The mages from Lindel came and said their spells, and nothing! And you think you can fix it just that easily? How dare you!” As the Sigle reached the door, they asked him for one last favor.

Armat raised one finger, and wiggled it a little for emphasis.

They asked that he take them to his field. The man opened his mouth to yell at them again, but they told him they would leave the area entirely and be gone forever by the next morning if he would only take them to his field.

The man thought about it for a while and grudgingly took them to his field. "It's been barren for five years now," he told the Sigle. "I don't see what's so important about a field I didn't even bother to plant this year." As they neared the field, though, the man knew something was different.

There was wheat in his field. A lot of wheat. And it had grown up out of nowhere, in the few hours since he had been by. It was full grown, too, and the tallest wheat you'll ever see.

Unnaturally tall wheat.

Armat stood up again, raising his arms all the way up for emphasis.

The man did not know what to say. He turned to the Sigle and asked what had happened. "You invited us into your home. This is our magic. We intend to stop this famine," their leader told him.

"But you did not even wave your hands or say a spell like the mages from Lindel, who came and took all our money without stopping the drought."

The Sigle had a different kind of magic, they told him. One that simply required them to want something to happen for it to become true. It was the oldest and purest form of magic and they had come to rid the land of the vile mages who extorted money from the people under the false promises of using magic to solve their problems.

Armat had calmed himself down. I realized I hadn't moved since he had begun the story, so entranced I was. I stretched my legs out in front of me, wincing a little, for they protested at the movement.

The man told the Sigle they had saved his life and that they were more than welcome to whatever of his they wanted.

They told him they were weary from travelling and asked for a room for the night.

He gave the Sigle his own bed for the night and himself slept on the floor, a sign of deep respect.

The next morning the Sigle traveled through the town, causing, in their own strange way, crops to grow and livestock to fatten. The town of Ineld became, and still is, one of the most prosperous towns in all of Plensiv.

But the Sigle were not done yet. They traveled through the land, to Lindel, where the Battle of Centurians was held at the castle of Centurious, who was the mage kind of Lindel. No one knows what happened during the battle. All of Centurious' men were killed and the Sigle never spoke of how. In the end, though, the Sigle were victorious. They took over the kingdom and spread prosperity throughout the land during their rule. They created the country that is now Plensiv.

They were peaceful leaders and there is a rumor that the man who had first welcomed them into the land became a high advisor for them, though no one knows if there is any truth to that. That man, though, was my great grandfather, Reclid, and our family knows that he was a high advisor to the Sigle during their rule.

They ruled the land for nearly four generations, until about 40 years ago, when the Centurians came back.

Armat stood up again, and began pacing. He furrowed his brow and paced quickly up and down his side of the fire. He looked angry, his face was downcast and he spoke somberly.

They came unexpectedly in the night. Rumor has it that one of Centurious' mages snuck out of the castle just before the battle and lay in hiding for many years. He corrupted those around him,

teaching them the magic Centurious had taught him and preparing them for a revolution against the Sigle.

Armat continued to pace, faster and faster. I had to stop watching him, as he was making me dizzy.

The mage killed the Sigle, caught, as they were, unaware and unprepared. Another rumor has it that he knew a secret about the Sigle and what made them weak and used that against them, to weaken them and make them easier to kill.

However it happened, the Sigle were killed and the next morning, the people of Plensiv awoke to the news. Crying was heard throughout each city and town and the new king, or so he called himself, Urlick, declared himself the new ruler of Plensiv, which he has ruled since.

Armat sat back down with a slouch. He looked tired, and a little sad. I could understand. I had been quiet throughout the story, afraid to break Armat out of the storytelling trance he seemed to be in as he told it. After a moment, Armat visibly forced himself to sit upright and look at me.

"This is where you come in," he said. "You have that same magic, though stronger than any I have ever seen. I know that because it showed itself without you being any the wiser."

"If all that is true, and I'm not entirely assured that it is, then what does that mean?" I asked.

"It means that now we travel to the capital to take back what is rightfully ours." He seemed to brush aside my comment about not completely believing him.

"I don't want to rule," I said, a little more timidly than I wanted.

"I don't mean for you to rule, necessarily. I mean for us to defeat the Rintrock and allow the rightful rulers, the peaceful people of this land decide for themselves how they want to be ruled.

That is what I want."

"I don't know if I understand."

"I mean for you to come with me to the capitol so we can defeat the king. When the Sigle ruled, there was peace and prosperity. Now, there is poverty and another famine is almost assuredly coming this winter since there were very few good crops. I plan to change that.

"How? There are only two of us against an entire army."

"I have amassed a small army of people in the capitol. Some of them have the tinelis like you do, though none come even close to being as powerful as you, and others are simply fed up with fearing for their lives. We will together storm the castle and return this land to how it used to be, how it should be."

"I think I understand you."

"That is good. I will tell you more as we go, but for now I think it is time for us to get some rest. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow."

I don't know if I quite believe all that Armat told me tonight. He seems like he has had a lot of practice with telling the story, and I don't know if that makes me believe him more or less.

Everything he told me goes against what they taught us at home, and it is hard for me to give that up. I wanted to say something to him earlier in his story about how wrong his story seemed to be, but he seems to believe it. Either that or he is an even better liar than a storyteller.

Armat has not steered me wrong yet, though, and I am tired. I think I will sleep and hope we find an answer somewhere on this journey. (6)

...

I'm sleeping in a bed tonight! And it is wonderful indeed. It feels like ages since Armat told me his version of the story of our land, though he says it was only nearly two weeks ago. The next morning, we awoke to a light frost.

It is getting colder with each day, and Armat says the snows may soon begin.

This morning, we ate in a comfortable silence, as neither of us is much of a morning person. We were running low on food, which I think is why Armat risked taking us into town for the night. That, and the road has very much taken its toll on me. My feet are covered in red and angry blisters, and my boots are almost worn out completely. I do not know how long I would have made it if we had not stopped tonight. I have tried to hide it from Armat, but I noticed a few weeks ago that he was looking at me the way my father used to look at my sisters when they were hurt, and I think he knew that I was struggling to keep up. I have never walked so far in my whole life, and every part of me wishes that we would be blessed with horses for the rest of this endless, mind-numbing journey.

After a cold breakfast (Armat took away our campfires a few nights ago because we were getting nearer to towns and he didn't want to risk being noticed) of hard bread and cheese, we started walking. Just after our short break for lunch we hiked to the top of a hill. As we came to the top, a cart passed us, pulled by a weary looking mule, on the road. So tired was I that I hadn't even noticed that we were walking along a well-worn path with deep ruts from the many wagons that have passed over.

"There's a town just through those trees, another couple of hours' worth of walking. We'll stop there for the rest of the day and tonight. You need some sleep and we need some more food for the rest of our journey."

I felt my face light up and Armat must have noticed because he let out a small laugh and gave me a big smile. We continued walking toward the town, and for the first time since the very beginning of our journey, I led us. If I didn't know I would have fallen, I would have run.

After a small time, we started passing small farms on the outskirts of the town. Nobody seemed to be in the fields as far as I could tell, and only a few dogs even bothered to bark at us. The farms looked poor, like they hadn't had a decent harvest in years.

"That's because they haven't," Armat told me when I asked. "The land around here has not produced a good harvest these past two seasons. The people think the land is cursed, so they pray to their gods, though it continues to do nothing."

"Why do they keep doing it, then?"

"People need something to believe in, or to blame when things go bad."

"But nothing is getting better."

"The king sends his mages to every town with this problem, but all they do is collect money the farmers don't have, and sit and drink for a few days." Armat spat out that last part with pity in his eyes. "This is why I brought you. You will rid the land of these evils and restore it to a level of prosperity that none of these people even remember.

That thought scared me a little bit, but seeing these unkempt farms and the haggard animals that lazily peered out at us made me want to believe that this was not how it was supposed to be.

Maybe I could do something to change the way things are around here.

As we got closer to the town proper, Armat took me to the side of the road.

"Tonight, you are my student and we are headed to the next town north of here, Brethen, to inquire about a book we need for our research. Do you understand me?" Armat asked.

"I think so."

"Good. Your name is Herint, and I am Rilend. Nobody may know who we are or where we are going. The king may have spies around."

"I thought you said they think they are safe from a revolt."

"They do, but there are some in the castle who believe differently, and I would hate to find out that those people have sent spies. Be careful. Talk to no one."

"OK."

"Absolutely no one. Understand?"

"I understand, and I am not a child," I said, getting a little annoyed at his tone. Armat seems to trust me most of the time, but as soon as something important comes up, he treats me like a child. It is annoying.

"I know you are not. It is simply very important that no one knows anything about us."

"Can we get going?" I asked, already walking away. If he was going to treat me like a child, I was going to show him that I was not one. I heard Armat take a few quick steps to catch up with me, and we walked the rest of the way in silence.

We entered the town without any trouble, and Armat steered us to a tavern nearby. He ordered us lunch, which turned out to be a hot roast with a potato soup. The smell of the food took away any anger I may have felt toward Armat. The food, though basic, was amazing. The roast was lightly seasoned and the soup was full of chunks of potatoes and onions and another vegetable Armat called squash that I had never seen before. Armat also ordered for us the inn's own ale, which the waitress told us made people come from three towns over. It, too, was good, but I was more hungry than thirsty so I focused on the roast and the soup first.

Armat also asked the waitress for rooms for the night and she went to get the owner of the inn, who was sitting only a few tables away. The tavern, it seems, is where all the townspeople who can afford to eat lunch every day. The innkeeper walked over to us and told Armat with a sly smile that he would have a room ready for us by the time we were done with our meal. As he

started to walk away, Armat grabbed his arm and said he wanted two rooms, one for him and one for his student.

"I have the coin to pay for both," Armat told him, flashing two gold coins.

"Many apologies for my mistake, kind sir," the innkeeper said. "Two rooms will be prepared. You can ask the lady here for directions when you are finished with your meal."

"Thank you, sir," Armat said. The innkeeper walked away with a slight bow to Armat and me and headed to the door.

"Why did you do that? We could share a room, so you don't have to pay too much," I asked him.

"I could take the floor. I'm getting used to sleeping on the ground."

"Sometimes I forget how young you are," Armat said with a small smile. "How old are you again?"

"Sixteen," I told him defiantly, "and I'm not young. If not for my father, I would probably have been married and with child by now."

"I too often forget that," Armat said. His voice softened and he told me, "I do not want you to have to deal with what people will assume would happen if you and I were to share a room. I wish to spare you from the rumors that a small town like this can spread so quickly. Plus I think both of us could use some privacy and a nice bath," he said with a small smile again.

"That makes sense, I guess, and thank you," I told him. We continued our meal in a comfortable silence, listening to the talk around us and enjoying not walking. After I was done eating, I sat back and sipped the ale, which I had to admit was pretty good. After a while, I found myself fighting to keep my eyes open. It was starting to get dark outside, and Armat turned to me and ushered me out of our seat. We walked to the inn and checked in with the innkeeper.

"A couple of baths, as well, if you have some please," Armat told the man with a smile.

"Of course, sir. I will have my wife draw some hot water for you." He called to her and a little later she came through the door and told us our baths were ready. One was on the first floor, on the far side of the inn, and the other was just up the stairs closer to our rooms.

Armat took the bath on the first floor and I took the one close to our rooms. It was my first bath in longer than I can remember, and I soaked myself until my body was completely shriveled and the water was cold. It was the best feeling, to wash a month's worth of dirt off. I dried off and put on a pair of clean clothes and walked to my room.

The room was basic but clean. And it had a bed, which was perfect for me. I sat down and wrote down all that happened today. Armat just knocked on my door and said we were going to go into the town while places were still open to get some food and supplies for the road. I hope I can get new boots too. (7)

...

I do not know what to say. I am very tired, but I wanted to write down everything that happened last night before I sleep to make sure I do not forget it or think it was a dream tomorrow.

After we left the inn, we went to the market. They were about to close, but the shopkeeper did not hesitate to let us look around. Armat said he probably had not done much business in a while, since most of the people here probably could not afford a lot of food. Armat ordered a few hard sausages, more cheese and more road bread that would hold up after we left. He also asked where we would find new clothing, and the man, Trinb his name was, told us the shop two doors down would be able to help us out there. Armat paid the man some extra coin to have the food delivered to the inn when it was ready. I think he slipped in even more extra than was needed, so desperate did the man look that it was hard not to pity him.

We walked to the clothing shop, where Armat ordered two new sets of clothes for each of us, and a new pair of boots each. I was so happy! I do not know where Armat keeps getting this money from, but I am happy that he has it and he does not hesitate to give it to people who need it. I saw him hand some extra to the man who took our measurements for the new clothes. Armat said he is the store's owner, Nilder. He was very nice to us and the breeches he gave us are great. They are thick for the colder days to come, and Nilder seems to have a gift for stitching. The shirts are also thicker, white and very warm. Nilder asked if we would need coats since it was getting close to the winter months, and Armat ordered one of those too.

But the boots! They are amazing! They are so soft, and so warm! Nilder out did himself on these, and I am so happy. Nilder said blisters will be a thing of the past when I wear these. Armat thanked Nilder, and we left the store with our new clothes in our packs.

As we left the shop, I asked Armat the question that had been on my mind since we entered the market. "Why does this whole market seem so desperate for money, if they make such quality things? It doesn't make sense."

"This used to be one of the most prosperous towns in the land. People from all around would come for Trinb's food and Nilder's clothing. They are widely known as being the best at what they can do. But when the harvest didn't come in, and when it kept not coming in, the people became poorer and poorer. They could no longer afford the fancy and expensive food and clothing. "

"Then why didn't they move to places where they could make a better living?"

"People like Trinb and Nilder have firmly established themselves in this town and refuse to leave their homes."

"I guess I understand. Why doesn't the king help?"

“The king cares for nothing but money, and helping these people out would be an expense he does not want to make, so little does he care for his subjects.” Armat spat out the last part with a disgusted look and turned to me. “This is why we aim to remove the king, so that talented people like Trinb and Nilder can once more make a living and so everyone in the land does not have to worry about their next meal or their next winter.”

He looked around. It was getting darker, but was still easy enough to see. “It will be interesting to see how many of these people will even survive the winter,” Armat said with a sigh. (8)

...

At that, I looked around at the buildings we were walking by. Underneath the dust and the evidence of years of hasty repairs, you could make out that these buildings used to be quality. There was even paint still clinging to parts of a few buildings and remains of shutters on others. A few windows were even glass!

So distracted was I in looking for the evidence of what used to be grand buildings that I almost ran right into a child running down the street. I quickly skipped out of the way but not in time to avoid it completely. I say “it” because I did not know at the time if the child was a boy or a girl. The child bumped into my hip, fell down on their face and immediately started to cry. Armat ran to it and picked it up. I could see now that the child was indeed a girl, not even three most likely. She was sobbing but Armat was able to ease her tears as he held her and jiggled her on his hip. Was he a father? Or had he been one at some point? There was something on her arm, a red and angry-looking bump. She was covered in dirt and her clothes were little more than rags. After a short time, she was calm again and Armat asked her name, which turned out to be Hindra.

“What are you doing out here tonight, Hindra?”

"The bumps. They hurt and I cried and cried and Momma told me to hush or to leave." She pointed to the bump on her arm. As I walked closer to her, I could see that underneath the dirt there were many more, smaller, bumps, though they looked no less red and angry.

"How did you get the bumps?" Armat asked her.

"They just came one day and Momma got real scared. She said we can't afford no doctor and got real sad. She don't really look at me no more"

"Oh, Hindra," Armat said shaking his head. "Let's see what we can do for you." At this, Armat looked at me and beckoned me over.

"This is a good chance to test your magic. I want you to clear your head and think about healing Hindra here." He jiggled her again and she let out a small giggle, burying her face in his shoulder.

"I don't know how to do healing!" I said.

"You were going to learn sometime and now is as good a chance as any. Your magic is rather simple on its surface. For now, all you have to do is want it to happen and it will. But you have to want it with all your heart. Here. Hold Hindra's hand and close your eyes. That will help you focus on her and clear your mind.

I took her small hand in mine and closed my eyes.

"Take a deep breath and focus on Hindra's hand. Focus on healing her body of the red bumps and the pain."

I took a breath and let it out slowly. Hindra's hand was so small in mine but she was burning up, and I could feel bumps on three of her small fingers. One of my fingers brushed one of the bumps and she let out a small cry.

"Sorry!" I said, opening my eyes. "Sorry."

"It is OK, right Hindra? Heveni was just trying to help you," Armat looked at Hindra, who nodded slowly at me. "Try again."

I closed my eyes again and took Hindra's hand in mine again. How could a small child be in so much pain? I could still hear her whimpering quietly and Armat was still trying to comfort her. I focused on her hand and how much I wanted her to be better. Thoughts of Emura when she was this young kept coming into my mind and I remembered the time she got really sick and we thought she might not make it. We sat by her side for three days in a row until she eventually started feeling better. Was that magic too?

As these thoughts went through my head, I lost my focus for a bit. Then Hindra made a small squeak of pain and I heard her stifle a whimper. That brought me back to the present and I focused even harder on healing her. For a long time it felt like nothing was happening, and I almost gave up. But then I thought of small Hindra, so innocent and in so much pain for no reason, and I focused even harder. After what felt like forever, I heard a small shout of confusion mixed with glee. I opened my eyes and didn't believe what I was seeing. Hindra was smiling and looking up and down her arms. The bumps were much smaller, and many of the smallest had disappeared.

Hindra was looking at her arms in surprise and she looked up at me with a mix of fear and joy. I quickly freed her hand from mine and she let it fall to her side. Still in Armat's arms, she tried to look down at her legs, which were also slowly clearing up of the bumps. She wriggled in his arms and he put her down.

We heard a woman calling for Hindra, most likely her mother.

"Momma will be so happy to see me!" Hindra practically yelled. She was still looking herself up and down in astonishment. I admit I was too. I couldn't believe what I had just done. I felt unbearably tired, though, and stumbled a bit. Armat caught me.

"Hindra, go to your momma and give her this," he said, handing her a silver coin. "Tell her I hope this helps her out."

"Thank you!" Hindra was practically yelling and she grabbed the coin and ran in the direction of the woman's voice.

"We need to get you back to the inn," Armat said, looking at me. "You did a wonderful thing tonight and you should be proud."

He looked a little worried and the world was beginning to spin around me, so he put my arm around his neck and together we walked back to the inn. I honestly do not know how we made it back, or when, but I woke up this morning in my bed.

I should probably go downstairs and get some breakfast. I hope Armat will be there so he can make some sense of what happened last night, or if it was just a dream. (9)

...

I must write this down quickly. Armat said we are leaving as soon as he gets back. He went out to get some more food and supplies for the road. I have packed my things, including one of the new sets of clothes. I am wearing the other. I threw out my old boots, as these new ones are more than enough for me.

Armat was downstairs when I went for breakfast. He had ordered food for both of us and had already eaten his by the time I woke up. The innkeeper brought out my meal when he saw me, so that it was still hot. It was a potato and sausage mixture, lightly spiced. I was starving, so I barely got to taste it, but it was delicious.

"We should talk," Armat told me quietly. "When you are done, we will go to my room to talk about what happened. Already people are talking about the mysterious strangers from out of town who healed Hindra last night."

"I'm sorry. You told me to." We stood up from the table.

"It is not a bad thing that you did, Heveni. Not at all. I was simply not expecting word to get around this fast, but I forget that you can't keep a secret in a small town like this. I have paid the innkeeper to keep quiet about us staying here," Armat told me as we walked up the stairs.

In his room, Armat closed the door and turned to me.

"I am going to head out quickly to get some more supplies for the road. You stay here and pack your things. I had planned on staying here for a few days to catch up on our rest, but I believe that would be a bad idea since people will be looking for the mysterious healer. We are not unsafe in this town but I would rather not take any more risks than we already have."

He looked at me. I was awake, but I was still tired and I must have looked it.

"I almost forgot to ask: how do you feel today?"

"I am so tired!" I told him. "You did not tell me healing people would be so exhausting."

"That is my mistake. I forget that you are still new to the tinelis and that you are unpracticed. Healing is the hardest part of the tinelis. It will get easier. Believe it or not, you are actually doing better than most do their first, or even second, try."

"Really?"

"Really. More often than not, the person sleeps the whole next day after doing less than what you just did."

"I am still very tired," I told him.

"I have known many a student who I was unable to awaken for an entire day afterward. You woke up on your own. That is a good sign."

"What does it mean?"

"It means you are powerful, more powerful than I had originally thought."

"Huh," was all I could muster. Only now do I grasp what he was saying to me. I am both terrified and excited about what he said.

"Go and pack your things. I will return as fast as I can and we will be on our way the soonest.

We need to leave before the people put it together that we were the ones at the tavern yesterday."

"OK." I headed out his door and into my own room to start packing. It is a good thing that I do not have too many things. My pack was getting full with the new clothing and the new coat in it. I hope Armat returns soon so we can get back to walking. I never thought I would say that after walking for so long, but I am afraid of what might happen if people find out about what happened and who I am. (10)

...

We need to reach Alren soon, Armat thought to himself. Heveni, so eager and full of life when they started out from Nirdea, was now dull-eyed and haggard again. We didn't stop for nearly long enough. She had lost weight and had a slight limp, unused as she was to walking so far and for so long, even with the new boots. Her eyes had lost their sparkle, and she looked ready to drop at any moment.

Yet she still refused to complain and instead followed doggedly just behind Armat as they walked.

"There should be a village just over this hill," he said. Heveni had barely noticed they were on a hill, so focused was she on simply forcing her tired legs to keep up with Armat. "We'll stop there

for the night. I don't think anything that could be after us expects us to be making such good time, so we should be safe," he said, whether to himself or her he was not quite sure.

They had seen very few signs of life in the last two weeks. No humans, or any signs that humans had ever been here, and very few animals.

All of a sudden, the trail started downward, and Heveni stumbled before catching herself. She looked up and stopped in her tracks.

Before her was a city. That it was a rich one was evident even from their position. They were just over half a league away, but the smell of people, food and animals was on the air. Heveni was speechless. For the girl who had never been out of a small farming town, the city was enormous.

Armat, realizing suddenly that Heveni wasn't behind him anymore, looked back at her and smiled. She ran to catch up with him and together they descended the hill. They soon joined the throngs of people on the trail to the city. When they came closer to the gate, Armat stopped and ushered her behind a large boulder on the side of the trail.

"We need to wait until midnight," he said. "I am known here, and it could be dangerous if someone identifies me here."

They were so close he could see that Heveni chafed at the delay. She must have sensed that a hot meal and a warm bed were close. But she quietly found a place beside him, hidden behind the rock and waited for the sun to go down.

"We're going to wait for the bells to call the closing of the gate. There is always a crowd of people, and the night guards have to close the gates so they let everyone in and check them once everyone is inside the city. We're going to join the crowd and have to slip away before they check."

"Where are we going?"

"To a friend's house, but we must slip away quickly, and it will be easiest if we go separately.

There is a tavern close by with a rooster on the sign. I will meet you there. I have to go meet with my friend first to make sure we are safe and welcome. I will come for you there." Armat handed Heveni a pouch of coins. "Get yourself a meal and some drink," he said.

When the bells called the gate's closing, Heveni was almost asleep where she sat. Armat stood up alert and whispered to her to wait. Soon they heard a rush of voices and Armat motioned her over.

"I will go first, then you join the crowd. I will meet you at the tavern as soon as I can. Stay put there and don't talk to anyone any more than you have to," he ordered. She nodded her understanding and off he went.

Heveni almost immediately lost Armat in the throng and began studying the crowd to find her opportunity. She joined the crowd, worried she would be discovered but the crowd simply moved to accommodate her. They were covered in dirt and Heveni shuddered to think what else. No one even looked up when she entered. She, too, put her head down and slumped to match the crowd.

Once inside the gate, Heveni looked to find the guards. They were just making their way around the crowd to surround it, and Heveni found a cleft in the wall where she hid. She held her breath as a guard walked by her, but he didn't even look.

Hoping Armat got out as well, Heveni waited as the guards to check every person in the crowd, before allowing them to trudge to their homes.

When everyone was gone, she inched her way out of the hole and looked around. It was completely dark and the small town was silent except for the occasional bark of a dog and a faint sound of music.

She started to walk. Armat had said the tavern was close by. She desperately hoped he wasn't wrong.

As she rounded a corner, a small group of people passed her by. They were talking and laughing, something that, based on the behavior of the townspeople earlier, she hadn't thought this town allowed. They smelled faintly of ale and Heveni kept walking in the direction from which they had come until the music got louder and she heard chatter coming from a low building with a rooster on the sign outside.

She quietly slipped inside and sat at a far table. A barmaid walked by and Heveni gestured her over. She ordered the first hot meal she had had in weeks: a pot roast with potatoes and squash on the side as well as a mug of the town's beer that the barmaid recommended.

When the food was delivered, Heveni was trying her hardest not to fall asleep but failing at it. She intended on savoring the flavors and the fact that she was comfortable and under shelter for the first time in what felt like years to her but she was so hungry. The food was gone almost quicker than she could chew. She savored the ale, though, which she had to admit was some of the best she had ever had.

She settled into her chair to listen to the music and wait for Armat to come for her. (11)

...

It has been too long since I last wrote of our adventures. I confess, it was my fault that they went unwritten. At the end of each night, I simply found I was so tired I could scarcely hold the pen. We have made it to Clearfy and are now in Armat's friend Alren's home for a time. Alren is an old, angry-looking man, and his face dropped as soon as he saw Armat, but he let us into his home. I could tell he was curious to hear how we got here, but he took us straight to our rooms to

let us rest. He is quiet and reserved and was obviously curious to find out how we ended up on his doorstep so late at night.

I took the first bath I have taken since we left so long ago. I stayed until the water was cold and my fingers were completely shriveled before I got out and put on a robe.

The bedroom he gave me is small but cozy and the bed is so soft, even softer for all the sleeping on the hard ground we have done.

I fell asleep before my head touched the pillow and slept well into the middle of the day. I should go and see what Armat plans to do here, but first I want to catch up on what happened to us on our journey here.

A lot has happened today, and I do not know how I will be able to put it all down here, but I will try.

I followed Armat and Alren's voices to find them this morning. Alren's house is a maze of glorious rooms, full of decorations and art. It was so dark and I was so tired that I missed them all last night when we walked in. My favorite room, though, is my room. It is plainer than the other rooms, but it is cozy. There is a small chest at the end of the bed where I placed my pack. I do not know if I can unpack my belongings yet because Armat never said if we would be staying here for longer than last night.

I finally found Armat and Alren in a sitting room close to the front of the house. I was scared to walk in because I could tell they had been having a deep conversation. My nerve almost failed me, but Armat must have heard me outside because he called me in.

"Welcome, my dear. How did you sleep?" Alren asked.

"Very good, thank you." I said.

"Good. Have you eaten yet? We kept some cheeses and bread for you." He went to the table by the window and brought back a small platter, setting it on the table in the middle of the chairs.

"Please. Have a seat and eat. You look like you're about to faint. Did Armat even feed you?"

Alren asked with a twinkle in his eye.

"We ate," I said. I worried that he would think badly of Armat. "But it was a hard walk."

"I'm only teasing," Alren said. "Please. Eat."

I sat down and picked up a small piece of the cheese and a large chunk of the bread. I didn't realize I was so hungry until I took a bite of the cheese. It was so wonderful and the bread was still warm from the oven. Soon the platter was pretty much gone, though Armat and Alren had only picked at it. I sat back, full for the first time in I don't even remember how long.

While I was eating, Armat and Alren continued talking.

"How have you been, Alren?"

"At peace," he said quickly.

"How is your wife?"

"She died five years ago."

"I'm sorry to hear about that. What happened?"

"She got sick and none were able to heal her or find out what was wrong. She died in her sleep one night. I wanted to send you a letter, but I did not know where you were."

"I have traveled a lot since I left."

"And you come back, in the middle of the night, begging at my door for somewhere to sleep for the night, without even a warning."

"I am sorry to come to you in these circumstances, but I have some good news."

"And what could that possibly be?" Alren seemed mad, though I couldn't quite figure out why.

(12)

...

"I found Heveni in a small town in the very northern reaches of the Minears. I believe she is the Prophecy."

Alren looked from Armat to the window. He turned red, and visibly had to control his anger. I did not understand what we had done.

"Why do you insist on putting me in danger like this?" Alren was not yelling, but he might as well have been. The vein in his neck stuck out and his face kept getting redder.

"I mean no harm, but I do mean to restore order to this kingdom."

"You and your ideas!" Now Alren really was yelling. I tried to sink into my chair. "The Prophecy means nothing! There is no one in this realm who can fit it, and no one crazy enough to lead a revolt against the king and his army."

"Alren, please." Armat didn't seem scared, though he was shaking.

"No! We live peacefully in this kingdom. I have lived here since the first failed revolution, peacefully. They do not know about me here and I would like to keep it that way. Why must you insist on putting me in danger like this?"

"I have not forgot about the wrong that was done us those many years ago, and I want to restore power to those who deserve it."

"Through a crazy prophecy that is most likely nonsense? And you bring this poor child into your mess, putting her in so much unnecessary danger?"

"Heveni knew the danger when she agreed to come with me."

"Where does this idea come from?" Both of them were standing by this point, though I do not know when they stood up, busy as I was trying to disappear from the room through the chair.

Armat still did not look phased, though Alren was yelling and clearly very angry with him.

"Heveni, tell Alren how you grew up."

(She tells him her story)

As I told my story, Alren visibly calmed himself down. As I talked, Alren's face slowly turned back to normal. He sat back down at his chair, and looked at Armat with what I could tell was surprise.

When I finished, Alren almost fell into his chair. He was visibly shaken and Armat looked at him with concern on his face.

"While we were on our way to Nirdea, she helped me kill five juneli."

"How did she help? The Illenera does not allow for killing."

"She made mud appear so that they got stuck. Then I was able to kill them."

Alren looked at me with surprise and suppressed a laugh.

"Really? How did you come up with that?"

"I remembered when I was younger and one of my sisters got stuck in some mud and she almost died. I figured I could at least try to slow them down."

"Very quick thinking, my dear," Alren said with a smile.

"Thank you, sir."

"Please, call me Alren."

"Thank you, Alren." I said with a small smile.

"Then, in Nirdea, she healed a young girl of the Contrey," Armat chimed in.

"The Contrey is almost unhealable, save for the most powerful of tinelisa." He looked at me. "Is this true?"

"There was a little girl in the town with big red bumps all over her. I made them go away." I felt tiny in his presence, though nothing in his voice seemed angry anymore.

"Then you, my dear, have a lot of power."

"What does that mean?"

"It means you and I are going to get to know each other really well in the coming months. I mean nothing against you, but would you be able to leave Armat and me alone for a little bit? There is more food in the kitchen and you are free to all of it, or to continue to rest if that is what you wish."

"Thank you." I said, standing up. (13)

...

"I just would like to talk to Armat for a little bit."

I nodded and almost ran out of the room. Glad to be free from their questioning, I decided to explore the rest of the house. It is huge, and the kitchen is impressive, with a full staff who were busy making something that smelled wonderful. I hope that it is for dinner tonight. One of the men in the kitchen, Kilrem is his name, asked me if I was hungry.

I had not realized it yet, but the wonderful smells in the kitchen had my stomach rumbling.

"I guess I am," I said, looking up at him.

"Well we have some fruit and cheese here if you would like some."

"That would be nice, thank you," I said.

He went further into the kitchen and picked up a small platter, which he then loaded with fruits and cheeses.

"Here you are. You can just leave it on the table in your room when you are done and somebody will take it for you."

"Thank you!"

"Of course, my dear! Let us know if there is anything else we can do for you."

I walked away with a small nod. The people here are so nice, it is almost scary. I have never been in the presence of people who smile so much. My father hated me and I could never do anything right, so it is strange to have so much attention on me. I do not know if I like it.

I got back to my room to eat and write down what happened this morning, and now I think I will rest for a while, as long as I can. (14)

...

Armat and Alren sat down in silence for a while, sipping Alren's wine and nibbling at some cheese. Neither of them seemed willing to break the silence.

Finally, Alren sat up and spoke. "Where did you find her again?"

"She was in a small town about 50 leagues from here. We've walked all this way and are on our way to the capital to meet up with the army."

"She may be powerful, but she has no idea what she is doing."

"She has too much power to be untrained like that, or to start a war against an entire kingdom, though. I wanted to know if you could train her."

"Do you realize what danger you are putting me in, even bringing her here? Especially after what happened in Nirdea?"

"I know, but no one knew who we were, and I paid the innkeeper to keep quiet about us staying at the inn. We were careful."

"You never know where the king has his spies, though."

"We gave fake names and left as soon as we were able. We hurried here and arrived two days before I expected to, as well," Armat said.

"Were you followed?"

"Not that I could tell and while she slept at night, I went back and disguised our trails more than we were already doing during the day."

"And no more magic?"

"No more magic. Will you teach her?"

"I will do what I can, but I make no promises. I have never worked with a student who is completely unaware of the power they possess. Nor have I ever worked with someone with so much power."

"I have faith in you."

"You are desperate," Alren said.

"That I am, but I have seen what you can do with students and the tinelis."

"Does she even want to learn?"

"I believe she does. She left her home behind willingly enough and followed me here."

"We will speak to her together when she wakes up, then."

"Thank you, Alren."

"Do not thank me yet."

The two men fell into a more comfortable, thoughtful silence. Each retreated into his own world, Armat calculating his next move in the war and Alren considering how he was going to teach a wholly untrained pupil to know power he felt that could not even begin to understand. (15)

...

Prince Minearo sauntered into his father's meeting chamber. He had been summoned early in the morning after a long night spent otherwise occupied with a local duke's daughter, again. And again, his father was making him wait. *Where could the old man be?* Minearo thought to himself with yet another sigh. It wasn't as if he had any friends itching to catch up with him, and if the ball last night was any indicator, it wasn't like he was in any condition to go visiting. He was probably just outside the door, waiting for the right amount of time to pass to get some point or other across to Minearo. It would be like him.

Remembering Trimán's performance at the ball did a little to brighten Minearo's spirit. The old man had greeted his guests with a halfhearted smile from his seat at the throne. He never even attempted to stand up to offer a greeting or accept a bow, no matter how important the person was. Many a duke and duchess had left the dais with a frown and a damaged ego.

They, of course did not know that Trimán could not stand anymore for any longer than a few seconds without having to hold onto something or someone. But they probably wouldn't care about that, anyway.

Loyal subjects, Minearo thought with an ironic grin. *I can't wait to inherit this mess.*

Just as his thoughts turned sour, King Trimán limped into the room.

He stood up for this one. It must be important, Minearo thought with a grin. Trimán practically fell into the nearest chair. He sat there slumped for a few minutes, leaning his head on his hand and closing his eyes.

How much energy did that take? Minearo thought. Despite his feelings toward his father, he was concerned. Trimán was not well. True, he was old and had eaten his way across the entire land numerous times, but he seemed to have taken a turn for the worse much quicker than he should have.

After what seemed like an eternity to Minearo, Triman raised his head and opened his eyes. He looked dazedly around the room for a long time and his eyes finally settled on Minearo. *What's happened to him?* Minearo thought. His eyes were bloodshot and sunk, his face pale.

He looks so bad. Minearo thought with an inner sigh. *This can't be natural.*

"Son. It is so good to see you." Triman's voice was raspy and that sentence left him out of breath. It took another few seconds for him to muster the strength to go on. "We have much we must talk about." He held out his hand and looked expectantly at Minearo.

He's always so formal. He never takes a break. Minearo thought with an inner eye roll.

"It is good to see you, too, father." Minearo replied, standing up from his chair. He walked over and knelt in front of his father, kissing his outstretched hand.

"Please. Sit near me so we may talk in private," Triman said, gesturing weakly to a wooden chair nearby. It was nowhere near as comfortable as the one Minearo had been lounging in, but, he thought, that was about right. *How dare I even consider relaxing in his presence?* He thought with another mental eye roll. He took a seat.

"What is it that you needed to talk to me about?" Minearo asked.

"I need to talk about me, and about your future," Triman rasped. He took another few seconds to catch his breath and Minearo waited expectantly.

"I am dying," Triman began after a while.

Big surprise there.

"And soon you will take over this great kingdom." Another few seconds to catch his breath. "But first there is much that you must know." Triman looked around. "This is the only room I have been able to keep everyone out of, until now. We should be safe enough to talk."

What could be so important that he needs to be so secret? Minearo thought.

“There is much I wish I could have taught you about running a kingdom that you will most likely have to learn on your own now.” He caught his breath again. “The first thing you need to know is that the King’s Council, the very same people who have advised me all these years, they are out for themselves.” Another break to catch his breath. “You must take their words under advisement, but be strong enough to make your own decision, no matter what they tell you. I fear I have indulged them too long and they have gotten too comfortable in their position here.” He caught his breath. “As king, it is your duty to look out for your kingdom.

“One thing you should know is that I have been poisoned.” Just as Minearo was getting interested in his story, Triman took another, longer, break to catch his breath.

“What do you mean?” Minearo asked, hoping to restart the conversation.

It took another few seconds for Triman to catch his breath before he replied, “I have been poisoned, and now I am dying.”

“Who would be able to poison the king? You have people your food before it even enters the kitchens and before you eat it! Who would even be able to do that?”

“My Council.” Triman replied. He took another break to catch his breath. “They are the ones who have poisoned me.”

“Why would they want to do that?”

“They have become arrogant in their positions. They no longer fear me as they used to.”

“I do not understand, father. Why would that make them want to poison you?”

“Last year, I began an attempt to reign in their powers. I noticed that they had become evil and selfish in their ways, and I sought to stop them.”

“What do you mean?”

"I found them writing their own decrees, ones that were solely for their benefit, and they were hiding them within decrees for the common good. I should have approached them, but I began refusing their decrees to sign instead, without telling them why."

"What did they do?" Minearo thought he already knew the answer. He knew the advisors and their famous anger when things didn't go their way.

"They first tried to reason with me, but they soon turned to other means, like trying to poison me. I have been slowly poisoned now for almost half of a year."

"Why would they want to poison you?"

"They held a magic over me for so long so that I did not see their evil ways until it was too late. I found out that the magic was in the signet ring I wore. It made me submit to their every will without even a thought."

Triman took another break. Minearo could see that his energy was failing him quickly. Pity washed over him, and anger. He pushed on further, trying to get as much information as he could before it was too late.

"What did you do?"

"When I took off the ring, I felt clear-headed and realized what they had done. Almost all of them have some sort of the magic in them so it must not have been hard for them to create the magic in the ring. I took the ring off and threw it into the fire one night. I claimed to have lost it and had the royal jeweler make a new one. I made him promise to tell no one and have it delivered directly to me in secret. He delivered it inside a robe, bless that man, and nobody was any wiser to it."

"Why did you not tell me about this?"

"It was not your burden, but mine. I thought their evil ways would end there, if I could pretend to still be under their spell and rule my own kingdom the way I saw fit, but they saw through my act."

"When did you notice the poison?"

"A few days after I took the ring off, I began to feel nauseous and light-headed. I thought nothing of it, and had the cook thrown from the castle for making bad food, but the feeling did not stop, no matter what I did."

"Why do you think it was them? I have heard many rumors about an army building itself up to start a revolution against our kingdom. Could they be responsible?"

"The army is nothing." He sat up straight in the chair. "I allow them to continue so the people may express their anger without bothering me. They have never done more than start a few fires here and there in small towns. They are not something you need worry yourself about."

"But why do you think it was the advisors?"

"The Council have been keeping a close watch on me. They think I do not notice them staring at me, but I do, and they keep a closer watch on me the worse I get. I am not as dumb as they want to think I am."

"I do not know that I understand."

"The Council have the good magic in them, the spoken one. But they use it for selfish reasons. The magic is still the only clean magic, but they have used it in corrupted ways."

"What is going to happen?"

"I expect I will die soon. I have been getting much worse these last few days, and I think they are finally done with me."

"Why would they want to do this? Why do they want to get rid of you?"

"They want you leading the kingdom."

"Why do they want that?"

"You are wholly untrained in running a kingdom and they want the power over you that they used to have over me."

"I do not understand."

"When I am gone, you will take control of the kingdom. I have not trained you on how to run a kingdom because I foolishly assumed I would be king for longer than it appears that I will be."

"What will they do?"

"They will most likely try at first to bring you under their control. That is what they did with me. You must not let that work. I indulged them for too long, and that is a burden you are to inherit."

"I will do my best, Father."

"You must, or the entire kingdom will suffer the consequences. Beware their magic, and accept no gifts from them. I —," There was a knock at the door and a muffled voice from outside.

"Sire? You are needed in the throne room for your meeting, sire."

"I must go. I do not think we have been overheard, but I implore you to watch out for yourself when you become king. Trust no one-."

Another knock and the voice repeated the information.

"I must go. Remember what I said." To the guards outside the door, he said, "You may come in."

The guards entered the room with a litter to carry the king to his meeting. *He's so weak. How could this happen and we didn't even know about it?*

Minearo paced around the room lost in thought until the guards came back and ordered him to leave. The door closed soundly behind him. He wandered down the hallways back to his chamber, still lost in thought. *What am I going to do?(16)*

...

I do not know any more if I am the prophesied one, and if I am, I do not know that I want to be anymore. Today was my first day of lessons with Alren.

It did not go well.

I do not wish to remember it, and so I will not write about it in my journal. I will say, though, that Alren is an angry man with very little of the patience he had for me when we first arrived. His teaching style is harsh and he told me many times that I should stop wasting his time and leave if I did not have the skills to do what he wanted me to do.

How am I supposed to know how to move a rock or a tree when I do not even know if I have magic? I asked him. He had no answer, but told me to stop asking questions and focus on moving the rock.

The rock still has not moved and we only stopped when it got too dark for Alren to see the rock not moving.

The magic inside me, if there even is any, seems more complex than it was when I healed the little girl in Nirdea. I asked Armat why that was. We were in the Alren's library. Alren was in town picking up food for dinner. He told Armat and me to stay inside and to not open the door. Armat echoed that to me. What are they afraid of?

"The needs of the child must have affected your magic and made it want to come out without even your knowledge. You were also holding her hand at the time. Physical contact with what the focus of your magic makes an easier bond form."

"Why couldn't I touch the rock when Alren was teaching me today? I might have been able to move it then."

"I cannot speak for Alren in this matter, but if I had to say, it would be because physical contact with the subject could become a crutch for you when you do magic."

"What do you mean?"

"If you only learn how to do magic when you are touching the focus, you put yourself, and many others, in a lot of danger. In a battle, can you touch the enemy to stop him?"

"I guess not," I said.

Armat smiled. "If you learn how to do the magic without having to touch the focus, then you will be all the better at it."

"How did I stop the juneli, then? I wasn't touching them, and I wasn't very tired afterward, like I was in Nirdea."

"That is rather simple, actually. You were actually in contact with the focus with the juneli. You created mud, while you were standing on the ground."

"Oh. I guess that makes sense, but why wasn't I tired?"

"Earth magic is usually easier on your body. You were doing something to the earth that it already knew how to do, the same way you made your crops grow when you were at home.

When you healed Hindra, you were telling her body to do something it didn't really know how to do, which was to heal itself. That is why you were so tired afterward."

"I get it, kind of."

"It's also like what you're doing now, trying to move the rock. Rocks do not normally move, unless they are moved by a gust of wind or a storm. You are trying to make the rock move, not causing weather events to cause it to move."

Armat looked at me sideways.

"Why are you not asking Alren this? He would have much better answers than I." Armat said.

"I don't think Alren likes me. He only yelled at me today and I was not able to move the rock at all."

"Armat is a tough teacher, it is true. But he takes his students seriously, and wants to make sure you know everything you can. He also has a much shorter amount of time in which to teach you, so he must hurry."

"That doesn't make it OK for him to yell at me all day."

"Be patient with him. He was the best teacher in the kingdom before the Rintrock invaded. You will soon start to notice progress, I do believe."

Armat stood up. "I am going to take a bit of a nap before dinner." He left the room.

I was left alone with my thoughts. I walked around the library, admiring the many titles displayed. I picked up one, *On the historie of the Magicke*, and walked back to my chair. I sat down and began to look through it. The book was amazing!

It was by a Twilbe Magin. I will have to ask Armat who he was. The book told about the history of both types of magic, the one I have and the Hiltre. It recounted for me, with diagrams and drawings, the Sigle and the story of the kingdom and magic, exactly like Armat had told it to me. I read the first half of the book and flipped through the rest of it. Written on the last page was the prophecy:

But one shall come, untrained, by forest and town, to the capital, the Prophecy. The Prophecy shall lead an army against the Hiltre-born ones and reclaim a kingdom for the people. The Prophecy will be known as a curse to many, and will be found a hermit in the land. The powers of the Prophecy will be immense. They will heal the sick with little pain, and defeat their enemies without a second thought.

Like Armat had said, the prophecy fits very well with my life so far. I do not feel very confident in my magical abilities right now, but the prophecy is right in many other ways, so I feel I should believe it. I have so many questions for Armat or Alren. (17)

...

Alren has been teaching me for two weeks without a single hint of magic, but it finally happened! I moved the rock!

When we started with our lessons today, Alren had me try to move the rock again. It had been three days full of lessons without anything from the rock. Each day was the same routine.

Alren would start us out early in the morning with learning about magic from books. He also was teaching me more of my letters and numbers, through reading books in the mornings.

I asked him about Twilbe Magin's book on the second day of our lessons. He said Magin was a highly respected priest who died about 50 years ago. Magin was famous for his predictions and his advice. His predictions, Alren told me, were always right, though oftentimes they were hard to understand at first.

Alren said that when Magin had the prophecy that I read about, he went from town to town to declare the news that the people's suffering would soon be over. Many people believed him and soon there was an army waiting for the Prophecy to come so they could take back the castle.

Magin suddenly died one day while he was on the road. Travelers found his body. There was no clear sign of how he died, but rumor around the towns has it that the king had him killed with the very magic he spoke out against. They say he feared that the army was becoming too powerful and posed a threat to his power.

Magin's death caused many from his army to disband and return to their homes. They were scared for themselves and their families and decided that living unhappily was better than dying.

Armat's father was in Magin's army, as was Alren and young Armat tried to join the army when he was ten years old. Alren stopped him, and Armat's father was killed in an ill-fated attempt to take the castle right after Magin died.

"Armat has worked hard to rebuild Magin's army, but people are afraid of the king and the magic he has at his disposal. The king also decreed that a corrupted version of Magin's book be published and sent to every household. This book tells a different side of the story, a wrong one, that makes the tinelisa look evil and the Hiltre look good.

"That book and the fear the people have of the king have caused Armat great difficulty in amassing his army. He does have a good number of people tired of the king and his evil ways, and he hopes that when news that he has found the Prophecy starts making its way through the land, that more people will join him," Alren said.

"Why did we travel in secret then, if he wants the word to get out?"

"Armat is a smart man. He wanted to make sure that you are the Prophecy, a sentiment I have doubts about, and that you were safely hidden, before spreading the news. Otherwise, your trip here might have been more deadly than it already was."

"I see." I was about to ask another question when Alren interrupted my thoughts.

"Enough of that, now. Back to our lessons on the land."

I was learning the anatomy of animals, the process that plants go through to grow, and the different beasts the king had caused to be created to suppress the people, including the juneli. It is all very interesting, and in this part at least I am doing well. Alren gives me books to read at night and I have a good mind for memorizing things. Alren seems well pleased with my progress.

After a quick break for lunch, Alren and I headed to the small courtyard outside his house so I could try to move the rock while he yelled insults at me. Today, when I woke up, I had an idea. If I couldn't touch the rock with my hand, maybe I could imagine myself touching it in my mind. I closed my eyes, partly to shut out Alren's voice and partly to help me picture the rock in my head.

I focused on the rock and where I wanted it to move. I focused on how I imagined the rock feeling when I touched it, and imagined my hand touching its cold and smooth surface.

I was having trouble shutting out Alren today. He seemed extra loud and angry. One of the servants in the kitchen said a messenger came for him last night and told him that his brother had gotten injured while training to become a knight at the castle, so I guess it is understandable that he would be in a cross mood. Still, I could not quite make his angry insults go away in my mind and I thought with an inner laugh (Alren allowed no smiles or laughter during our outside exercises), I imagined the rock sliding over to the bench where he sat and running into it.

A yelp of surprise made me open my eyes. Alren had moved from his perch and was now standing and looking at me with an odd look in his eyes. The rock, which had pretty well stuck in the ground the entire time we had been training, was now beside his bench.

Alren came over to me in a half-walk, half-jog that I assume was his running with a smile on his face. "That is how your magic works. Take what you just did and remember every step, including how it felt in your mind," he told me before I had had time to process what I had just accomplished.

Just as it was sinking in that I had finally done what he had needed from me, a wave of nausea and tiredness passed over me. It passed slowly, but I stumbled. Alren caught me and lowered me

to the ground gently. He called for a servant and asked for water and fruit juice to be brought at once. The servant returned quickly with both and a tray of meats and cheeses.

Alren joined me on the ground and the servant, Kilrem I remembered once I looked up and saw his face, set the tray and the pitchers on the ground before us.

"You did very well today," Alren said. He still had a shocked look in his eyes and a small tremor in his voice, but his voice was steady and comforting. "Eat and drink. When you are strong enough, you will go to your room and relax. Our lessons are over for the day."

"I can continue," I said weakly. I didn't want to.

"You cannot. Once you have more practice, magic will not take so much of your energy, but until then, we will take this slowly. You did much better than most students."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The fastest that I ever had a student move something for me was one week, and they moved a small coin a few inches until it fell off a desk. You moved a heavy rock ten feet."

"Oh," was all I could muster, as tired as I was. My mind was already clearing up, but my body felt sluggish.

"Eat. Do not talk. When you are strong again, we will walk to your room."

I ate and drank, as did Alren, though I will say I ate much more than he did.

When the food and much of the juice was gone, Alren stood up stiffly and offered me his hand. I took it and stood up. I felt much better and even probably could have continued our lessons.

Alren, though, said I needed to rest, so he walked me to my room and left me there. I took a small nap, and decided to catch up on the readings he has given me and on this journal.

I am still in shock that I moved the rock. Something seemed to change in Alren, too, when that happened. In his eyes there seemed to be a hint of something like fear that he quickly masked. I

hope maybe he will change his way with me and become gentler in his teaching, but I guess I will find out tomorrow when we have our lessons.

The bell is ringing for dinner. I am starving. (18)

...

Minearo woke up to a knock on the door to his chambers. It was early in the morning and the girl in his bed, *What is her name again?*, stirred slightly before going back to sleep. Minearo put on clothes and went to his study to let the visitor in.

It was Ilwat, one of the Council members.

"Your father. He is dead," Ilwat said.

Oh no. "What do you mean? I was just in his chambers last night and he looked like he was getting better."

Minearo had tried to forget his conversation with his father, but it had been hard to deny that the king looked like he was taking an unnatural turn for the worse. Two days ago, though, he had started looking better and last night when they had spoken, the king had looked better than Minearo ever remembered. *I am not ready to run a kingdom.*

"The rest of the Council is looking into how he died, but it seems unlikely that we will find anything."

Of course you won't. Minearo thought with an inner sigh. *What am I going to do?*

"Thank you for telling me. I would like to be left alone if you please," he told Ilwat somberly.

"Sir, I am afraid that is not possible. Your coronation needs to be held now, or else the kingdom is without a king."

"What do you need from me?"

"We will be waiting in the throne room in 20 minutes to coronate you. The Council and all the

dukes and duchesses are invited to witness. The king commissioned a crown from the royal jeweler a while ago, and the Council has ensured that it is ready for you. Later we will have a true ceremony, after a funeral for your father.”

“I will be there, but for now I would like to be on my own to think.”

Ilwat started to say something, but Minearo closed the door before he had the chance. He leaned against the closed door and let out a large breath, closing his eyes. He took a few minutes to collect himself before heading back into his bedroom to get ready.

Pirnisia, that's her name! he thought to himself. Pirnisia was sitting upright in the bed, looking expectantly at him.

“Where did you go?” she asked.

“There was a Council member who needed to talk to me.” He was not about to tell Pirnisia about his father. He had only met her last night and had no idea who she would answer to, and did not want to run any risks he did not know about.

“Is everything OK? You look sad.”

“I would like to be alone, if that is OK. Elintio will let you out. He should be just outside the door. I will let you get dressed.” Minearo said curtly. He felt a little bad being rude to her, but he needed to be alone to figure things out for himself. He could afford no distractions anymore.

“You can talk to me,” Pirnisia said.

“I am fine. I have a long day ahead of me, so if you will please get dressed, that would be a great help.”

“I will, then.” She seemed a little angry, Minearo noted, but she obeyed, getting out of the bed and getting dressed. When she was ready, Minearo showed her to the door to his chamber and introduced to Elintio.

"He will take you home." Minearo said.

"Thank you, Prince Minearo, for last night. I hope we can do this again sometime," she said with a sly smile.

"Sure," he said, closing the door.

Minearo got dressed in his finest clothing and headed to the throne room to start his reign.

(Becomes king) (19)

...

Something seems to have changed in Alren after I moved the rock. He has become much more agreeable, though he continues to pose impossible-seeming tasks.

Armat has mostly been gone for the last week or so. I see him only at night. Now that he is back among a lot of people, Alren said he is back to recruiting for his army. He leaves early in the mornings and returns usually for dinner. I miss him, but Alren keeps me busy during the day with lessons.

It has been a few days since I last wrote in this journal, and I regret that fact. I have simply been too tired after Alren's lessons to do more than eat dinner and sleep.

The day after I moved the rock, Alren had me move the rock again. It took a very short time, maybe a minute, for me to do it this time and I was able to move it the same distance. A wave of exhaustion washed over me, but it passed much quicker this time. I bent over until it passed and when I stood up I looked at Alren with a smug smile. Alren then drew a line in the grass with his shoe.

"Move the rock to this line," he said.

I tried and I tried, but the rock kept going too far or barely moving at all.

"I don't know what I am doing wrong," I told him as we took the first break from lessons he had ever given me.

"I imagine you are trying to imagine an exact distance for the rock to travel. The problem is that you don't know the exact distance it needs to travel. All you need to do is want the rock to travel to the line, nothing more. Your mind and magic will fill in the blanks after that. Come on. Let's try again."

This time, I simply imagined the rock travelling to the line. When nothing at all happened, I opened my eyes and shrugged at Alren.

"You do need to tell it which line to travel to. It is most likely confused because of all the lines around here that you might not notice, and doesn't know which one you mean."

"Got it," I said. I imagined the line, then, as I saw it. I saw Alren drawing the line in the grass and imagined the rock traveling to that line that he had drawn. I opened my eyes and it worked!

"Good job!" Alren shouted. "What did you do to make that work?"

"I imagined you drawing the line and imagined the rock moving to that line that you drew."

"You imagined it?"

"Yeah, the same way I imagined the rock moving when I did that. I just imagine it doing what I want it to do and will for that to happen, and it has been working so far."

"I have not heard that from a student before. All magic of this kind works in slightly different ways for different people. Most students have to point to what they want to happen and order it to happen. I have never heard of anyone imagining something and it happening."

"I got the idea when Armat said you can't rely on touching the object because you can't always be in contact with the thing you want to do something. I thought if I could imagine the rock and

imagine me touching it, that it might work. It did the first time, but I did not have to imagine myself touching the rock today," I said.

"That is progress. You should not rely on touch, as Armat said. I am glad you do not even need touch in your head."

Another wave of exhaustion washed over me, this one much bigger than the last. I sat on the ground as my vision started spinning. Armat remained standing.

"You have done a lot today, much more than I should have expected from you. I have pushed you farther than I should have. You used much more magic than your body is used to in your attempts to move the rock to the line today." There was a tinge of regret in his voice I was not expecting to hear.

"I will be fine in a bit," I said between deep breaths.

"You will, but we are done for the day. When you are ready, we will walk to your room and you will rest. You have done well today."

"Thank you, Alren."

"Hush, child, and drink this." He handed me a glass of cold fruit juice, but my hands were shaking, so he tipped the cup into my mouth. The juice sent a chill down my spine and the sugar slowly revived me. I felt more tired than I ever have.

"I think I am ready," I told Alren after a bit. He reached his hand out to me to help me up. I took it and stood up and almost fell right back down again. My muscles were stiff from sitting for what must have been almost an hour. Slowly they worked themselves out and I stood up straight. Together, Alren and I slowly made our way to my room, where I slept soundly through dinner and into midmorning when he woke me up to resume lessons.

We skipped the book lessons that day and moved immediately outside to practice magic. Alren had me practice twice more making the rock move to a specific place. He had me move it to another line he made in the grass and then to one wall of the house. Both times I did it rather easily and without too much exhaustion afterward. I was still a little sluggish from the day before and so was not quite as fast, but Alren seemed pleased enough.

We took a break for lunch and then Alren said we were moving on to a new challenge.

"You are going to move something without seeing it," he told me.

"How do I do that?"

"We will start with moving things in my house, since you are familiar with the layout and the objects inside it. Then we will move on to things you are not familiar with once you have mastered that."

"But how do I do that?"

"I do not know the particulars of it, especially since your magic seems so vastly different and more powerful than any I have come into contact with before. Try to do what you have been doing and just change it a little bit, like what you did when you moved the rock to a specific place."

"OK," I said.

"You have been picking these things up much more quickly than any student I have had before. That is good, because we do not have a lot of time for you to learn these things. I have faith in you."

"Thank you, Alren."

"Enough stalling, then. Let's see what you can do. I want you to take a book, any book, out of its place on the bookshelf and lay it on the table. I will be in there waiting. Give me something interesting to read," he said with a smile.

Alren headed inside. He sent Kilrem outside to watch over me and make sure that I was OK while I tried to move the book. I closed my eyes and thought of Alren's library. I thought of the day I had read *On the historie of the Magicke* and thought of myself taking the book off the shelf. Instead of remembering how I read the book in a chair, though, I tried to imagine me setting it on a table by the chairs. I imagined the cool, rough feel of the dark wood as the book set down on top of it.

A wave of exhaustion washed over me, which was becoming the telltale sign that it had worked. Alren came outside after a bit and found me sitting on a bench with my head between my knees. Kilrem was beside me with a glass of juice. By the time Alren came outside, the tiredness was mostly gone and I felt more like myself again.

"It worked. Good job, young lady," Alren told me. "Any reason you chose that book in particular?"

"It was the only one I have actually read part of, so I thought that one would work the best," I said, looking back at him.

"Ah. Understandable. That is an interesting book, one I should have covered in our morning lessons. I will make a note to do that soonest. How much did you read?"

"About half of it, and the Prophecy on the back. Armat told me much about it already, and how the king has a false version of it that he makes everyone read from."

"Armat has told you much, but not all. There is much more to that story that is not known to many."

"Oh," was all I could think to say.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine," I said. "I'm not as tired as I used to be."

"Bodies with magic react quickly when magic is used, and they get used to the drain very quickly. Your body, though, seems to improve extraordinarily quickly."

I stood up. "I still don't feel good after I do something, but I just feel a little tired now, nothing more."

"That is good," Alren said. "We will continue, then, if you feel up to it. I do not want to push you too far, but it is good for the body when you exercise its magic."

"I can do more," I said. Magic is becoming fun for me, and I didn't want to stop learning. "What would you like me to do?"

"We are going to try to repeat the book exercise, but this time, use a book you did not read or look at."

"How can I do it if I do not know what it is that I'm moving, though?"

"Does it still work to imagine what you want to happen?" Alren asked.

I nodded.

"Then try imagining where the book is that you want to move, and imagine it moving. You do not need to know everything about something to make it bend to your will, though that does help."

"I do not know if I understand."

"Try it. We will go from there," Alren said as he started walking back into the house. "Give me a little bit to get to the library and then go ahead."

"OK," I said. Kilrem, who had stayed quiet throughout our conversation, lounged on the bench and looked expectantly at me.

"You have impressed him," he said.

"What makes you say that?"

"Alren is not a man who compliments easily and he just complimented your work many times. You have really made a mark on him."

"I hope so. He has been working me very hard and it is nice to see that it is working finally."

"I will be here. Let me know if you are feeling ill and I will call to Alren and tell him to stop.

You are looking a bit pale, but I do not worry if Alren does not worry."

"I will. Thank you, Kilrem," I said with a smile.

I closed my eyes and remembered myself in Alren's library surrounded by books. I remembered the neatly stacked books filling the bookshelves until they bowed slightly under the weight. I saw in my head the place where *On the historie of the Magicke* belonged empty, as the book was most likely still on the table where I had left it. I remembered the crisp smell of old books in the room, as well as the comfortable warmth of it, and the comfortableness of the chairs.

All of a sudden in my head, there was a bloom of what felt like fire. An intense pain hit me and almost as soon as it came, it was gone. In its place was a comforting heat that seemed to renew my mind. I felt stronger than I ever had, and all tiredness from earlier was washed away.

I didn't know what to think, but I pushed that feeling to the back of my mind to ask Alren about later and focused on the magic.

I tried to pick a book. I imagined myself walking the shelves of books and stopping at one. It was on the top shelf, higher than I could reach, and on the far left of the shelf. I imagined it coming off the shelf and coming to rest gently at the table, on top of *On the historie of the Magicke*. I

imagined the feel of the book as it rested on the table, its binding soft and firm, and the small sound it would make when it landed on top of *On the historie of the Magicke*.

There was no telltale tired feeling and I opened my eyes disappointed, just as it hit. It was a much smaller wave this time and felt only like I had felt the first night Armat and I had stopped walking instead of the extreme feeling of exhaustion I felt at the end that usually happened after a magic worked.

Alren walked outside and found me still standing. He looked at me confused.

"How do you feel?"

"Only a little tired. Did it work?"

"It did. I am surprised that you are not more tired."

"I am, too," I said.

"Where was the book that you wanted to move?"

"It was on the top shelf, right behind your big chair, on the far right."

"Any particular reason you chose that one?"

"Not really. I couldn't read the titles of the ones on the top shelf when I was in there."

"Ah. I see."

"It was supposed to land on top of the first book."

"That it did, young one."

"Then why do you look so confused?"

"The body's reaction to magic should be much stronger than it seems to be at this stage. You have only been successful in magic consciously for three days. I am only confused about that."

"There was a flash of light in my mind just before I tried to move the book," I said. "It hurt a lot, and then it was gone."

Alren looked at me in surprise. "We must go inside to talk. Now," he said, ushering me inside.

He steered me into his library and sat me down in one of the chairs, sitting himself down

opposite me. "You have come into your magic," he told me. "That is what the light was."

"I thought I already had magic."

"You do, but you do not come into your full powers until the magic decides that you are ready."

"I do not understand."

"That is what the rest of *On the historie of the Magicke* says. People with tinelis have to wait to come into their full power. That is why it is lesser known than the Hiltre. People with Hiltre get their power from learning more spells, so as long as they keep learning, they can keep performing different magics. Your magic, though, is infinitely more powerful, once it decides to come fully to you. Until it decides you are ready, you are stuck doing small tasks like moving rocks. Tinelisa usually are in their 30s before they come into their full power. That is why it is not widely known about; because not many people work on their magic for that long without giving it up."

"What does that mean for me?"

"We will continue learning, but know that you are more powerful than any student that I have ever had and there is a limit to what even I can teach you. I will give you all the knowledge I have and you will leave here with as full an understanding of your powers as I can give you."

"Are we going to keep going today?"

"I think we are done for today. We will celebrate tonight," Alren said with a wink and a smile. "I will begin cooking our meal. Please read the other half of *On the historie of the Magicke*. We will talk about it tomorrow."

I hopped up from my chair as Alren stood and gave him a big hug. "Thank you Alren!" I said.

He took a second and I thought he might not hug me back, but I eventually felt his arms wrap around me. "You have given me a new sense of hope. It is I who should be thanking you." He walked out of the library and toward the kitchen. I may have been wrong, but it looked like he was moving faster than I had seen him move in a long time.

I picked up *On the historie of the Magicke*, and leafed through it trying to find where I had left off. I could feel the power coursing through me. I had an idea. I thought of the last part of the book that I remembered and imagined flipping to it. When I opened my eyes, I was at the last page I had read, with only the slightest bit of a tired feeling, which went away almost before I noticed it.

I smiled and started reading. The rest of the book was as interesting as the first with more information about when a person comes into their full powers. The blinding light is the magic's way of announcing its presence. The book also said that I would notice that each time I wanted to do something, it would be done easier.

It also warned that becoming too dependent on magic has always ended badly. Some people become corrupt, others have gone insane, and some have gone so far as to have the magic leave them in the same way that it came, in a bright flash of light that comes and goes just as quickly.

I took that to mean that I shouldn't use my powers to flip to a spot in a book anymore. I finished the rest of the book just as Armat walked into the room.

"How did today go?" he asked with a sly smile.

"Pretty well, I'd say," I replied. "Alren said I came into my powers."

Armat sat down in the chair across from me. "That's what Alren told me. He sent a messenger to find me. I am so proud of you."

"Thank you," I said. "It doesn't feel real at all."

"It may take a while to sink in. People don't usually come into their powers until much later in their lives, as Alren probably already told you."

"He did. What does this mean for me?"

"It means that, without a doubt, you are the Prophecy," he said with a smile. "This is both good and bad news for you."

"What do you mean?"

"It means that you are the one who will help us take the kingdom back, but it also means that your lot in life will be a hard one."

"Will you stay with me?"

"I will. I will be there with you every step of the way, until my last dying breath. This I promise you." Armat said this with a kindness and steadfastness I had never seen from him before.

"Thank you, Armat. For everything." I said with a smile.

As silence fell in the library, Alren walked in and announced that dinner was ready. Our dinner that night, prepared largely by Alren himself, was delicious. (20)

...

ENDS NIGHT.

Today Armat went out even earlier in the morning to try to recruit for his army. He is having some luck, he said, though not much. We are close enough to the castle that many people fear the king's authority, but far enough that some are brave enough, and angry enough, to join.

Armat also said the king died mysteriously one night about a week ago, and that the people are afraid that the new king will be worse than he was, so some join out of that fear as well. I do not know what he means for me to do, but he told me to focus on my lessons with Alren for the time being. I cannot explain it, but I feel as though I must trust him. He has been so kind to me and

has shown me so many new things that I never would have otherwise seen, that I feel like he only wants what is best for me. I do not know how to explain it better than that.

I fear that we are nearing an end to our time at Alren's house and that saddens me. I have gotten used to Alren's ways and his generosity in letting us stay at his house. I even have begun enjoying lessons with Alren.

Our lessons still take largely the same routine as they always have. We have book lessons in the mornings and practice magic in the afternoons.

Alren assigns many tasks for me to do when we practice magic. I have learned how to move things from one room to another, set them down gently and return them to their original place. I have learned better ways to alter the ground around me, how to grow things and make them shrink, like plants. I made the grass in Alren's courtyard grow to my shoulder and then shrink back to where it was in the span of less than a minute.

I have also learned to heal people and animals. That happened one day when Alren brought to me a dog that had been injured by a wagon passing by. The poor thing's leg was badly hurt and it kept whimpering. Alren took it into a room inside the house and sent Kilrem outside to tell me to heal it. I pictured a dog in the house being injured. Alren had taken the dog into the house before I had seen it, so I did not know what it looked like.

"Remember the books and the diagrams of animal bones and muscles. You must picture those joints to make sure the healing is precise and complete. This one should not be as hard as it was in Nirdea, since the dog's body knows how to heal itself already," Alren told me before he headed inside.

I pictured a dog like the one mother and father had when I was little. The girls and I had loved playing with him. I pictured healing his leg and being healed once more, running and playing as

he always had. I pictured, too, the diagrams of a dog's muscles and bones and willed the dog to heal and become as complete as the diagram showed.

A pang of a tired feeling crept its way into my mind and was almost instantly gone. I opened my eyes as a small body rammed into me. The dog, a lovely dark brown mutt, was running circles around my legs. I bent down and allowed it to sniff my hand and my face. Tail wagging, the dog licked my face and my hands and let me pet him. He was skinny, and had probably been on the streets for a long time, from the matted state of his fur.

"Can you keep him?" I asked Alren.

"I would love a companion in my old age," Alren said with a smile. "You did a good job, Heveni. He seems to be completely healed inside and out and doesn't seem to remember being hurt at all."

"He's so cute!" I said, "But he needs to be cleaned."

"He does. How about you take care of cleaning him? It is getting late in the day and I am tired. We can be done with lessons for today. You deserve a break."

"Thank you!" I said. I turned to the dog. "You stay here while I get some water."

Kilrem, who I had almost forgotten in all the excitement was also in the courtyard, rose from his bench and walked over. "I will keep him here, miss."

"Thank you!" I ran inside to grab soap, water, and an extra towel. (21)

...

It seems like our time with Alren is about to come to an end. He certainly has become a much more gracious teacher in our time together. He even smiles now sometimes during our lessons. Today, when I walked outside to the bench where we usually meet up, though, he looked somberly at me.

"Today is a day you will not ever want to forget, Heveni. This may be the most important day in all of your learning," he said.

Armat walked outside chewing on what looked like a biscuit. I looked at Alren confused. Armat was usually about the town during our lessons trying to recruit people for his army in the Capital. He had never come to watch the lesson, and had always told me I was better off if I could just focus on learning from Alren.

"What are you doing here?" I asked him.

"Today's lesson is very important for you, Heveni. We decided it would be best if both of us were here to make sure you learned everything and would remember it," he told me.

"What am I supposed to learn?" I was very curious. Both of them had a look of intense seriousness that I had never seen on either of their faces.

"Today, you are going to learn your limits," Alren said.

"I do not understand," I said. What in the world could that mean?

"There are only three rules to govern the tinelis, but they are the most important rules. To disobey them would end tragically. At best, you go crazy. At worst, you die a tormented death and kill anyone unlucky enough to be around you." That was Alren. His gaze was so intense it felt like he was gazing right through me. "Many a tinelis has gone crazy or been lost from not heeding these rules."

Armat was looking down and would not make eye contact with anyone. He was also oddly silent, which for him was not normal. It is sometimes hard to tell how he is feeling. Maybe he had lost someone because they disobeyed the rules. I want to ask someday.

"What are the rules?" I asked.

"One: you are never to bring something back from the dead," Alren said.

"This means people and animals both," Armat amended. "The tinelis is built on balance and what is natural. That is why things that are already in an object's nature are easier for you to make happen. Death is a part of nature and it is an important part of the balance. You are never to disturb that balance, no matter your reason."

"Do you understand?" Alren asked.

"I do. Leave things be when they are dead."

"No matter how much you may want something to be alive again, you must leave it. It will only end disastrously," Alren said.

"There was one who tried to defy this rule. He loved his wife and grieved terribly when she died. One night, when he had had enough of sorrow, he went to her grave to bring her back. He dug up her body and willed life back into her. Instead of only waking her, he gave life to everything that had died in that area, ever. His life force went into that ground and he died where he sat. Every being that had ever perished there, though, awoke for only long enough to make it halfway to his house before they collapsed into the ground once more," Alren said. "This is why you must not try to do this. You will die, and nobody needs to see the dead again."

"Death is a much stronger enemy than anyone may know, and you will lose," Armat added.

"I understand. I will not try to reverse death."

"That is good," Armat said.

"The second limit to the tinelis is that you may not alter the thoughts or emotions of other people," Alren said.

"You are not to make them love, hate, fear, nothing. It is tempting to think that you can fix a problem by making someone think something different, but that is a bad idea, for both of you," Armat added.

"The human mind is a sensitive thing, and is prone to taking the easy way out. If you change something in someone's mind, their mind becomes dependent on your power to tell it what to do. You are not a mind reader, nor are you the ruler of someone's life. It will only drive both of you crazy if you try," Alren said, searching my face to try to meet my gaze.

"I get it. Leave dead things dead, and leave people's minds alone. What's the next one?" I asked. I would not meet his eyes. I am old enough to understand what they are talking about, and I have not done anything to prove that I am not trustworthy. Alren must have sensed that I was getting angry because he moved on without saying anything further.

"The third rule you already know a little about. You may never kill another being," Alren looked at me. "Armat told you this when you fought the juneli, he tells me."

"I wanted to kill them so they would stop hurting him," I said. "But I couldn't do anything. It was like I was frozen."

"This rule is the easiest to follow because it is impossible. Or no one has yet been able to do it," Alren said. "This is why it is the third one I wanted to tell you."

"I understand. I already knew that one," I said, giving both of them a pointed look to show that I am not a child.

"I know you do, Heveni," Armat said, putting a hand on my shoulder, "but you need to know how important it is that you don't try this one. Tinelisa have tried before many times and after too many tries something inside them seems to break. They lose a piece of their mind with each try. I do not want you to face the same fate."

"That is why we tell you these rules," Alren said. "It is not to annoy you or talk down to you. It is for your own good. Even the strongest tinelisa have lost their minds or died after trying to break even one of them. We do not want the same fate for you."

The kindness in his voice, something I am still not used to hearing, calmed me down. I understood where they were coming from, and from the pained look in Armat's eye, it seems like he knows the effects of breaking the rules on a personal level. Part of me wants to know what happened, but I know that if I rush him, I will never get the story out of him.

Armat left shortly after that, saying he was going to head into town to do some more recruiting.

"Aren't you running out of taverns yet?" Alren asked with a smirk.

"Hardly. I have a schedule that I use. Now that I have proof that Heveni has the tinelis," Armat replied, pointing to the dog we had decided to call Pinga, "it is much easier for people to believe me. We will soon have an army to scare even the hardest king."

Alren grunted and Armat turned with a smile and a whistle for Pinga, who trotted over and sat next to him. We heard the door close a bit later. Alren turned to me.

"What are the three rules?"

"Alren!" I yelled, a little bit louder than I wanted to.

"This is the last time. I promise. I just want to make sure you know every tool I can give you.

They may come in handy one day."

"Fine," I conceded, reminding myself that they wanted what was best for me. "Don't bring the dead back, don't change people's thoughts and feelings, and don't kill things."

"Good. Be sure you do not forget those rules. They are to guide your use of the tinelis for the rest of your life. At times, they may be hard to follow, but I believe in you. You are smarter and stronger than any of my previous students."

I was speechless at that. Alren had hardly ever allowed anything other than surprise that I was able to get up and dress myself successfully each morning, and now he was calling me his

smartest student. The look on my face must have shown my surprise because Alren cleared his throat.

“Enough of that. Let us continue our lessons while we can,” he said, walking away quickly.

I let out a sigh and laughed quietly to myself. This was more like the Alren I knew.

Armat started back into the house. With a whistle to Pinga, he said, “We’re off to town, then. It is best to keep getting people as long as we can. (22)

...

“I think we should raise the taxes, just slightly, so we are able to start a small savings pile just in case another famine hits.”

A murmur of agreement rolled through the seven men seated in front of Minearo. He inwardly rolled his eyes. *These meetings are so pointless!* He thought. It had become a routine. The meeting would start and Minearo would try to talk about a topic he needed advice on, and somehow someone would turn it around to a means of raising taxes. *It’s like they think I don’t have a clue!* The reasons they gave for raising the taxes on the people were as thinly hidden as his losing patience with them. *For a savings account? More like for their new wardrobe,* he thought with an inner smile. The Council, it turned out, seemed to be just as corrupt as his father had tried to warn him. *Maybe I should have listened more to him when he told me how bad these people are,* he thought with a sigh as he opened his mouth to address the waiting Council. *Maybe then I would know how to deal with them.*

“We do not need to raise the taxes again, Ilwat. The townspeople have a hard enough time paying them as it is,” Minearo said.

"They cannot pay it because they do not want to," another of the men, Liano, said. He did nothing but agree with him for the entirety of each of the meetings. *I wonder what Ilwat did to him to make him so obedient.*

"No, they cannot pay them, Ilwat," Minearo retorted. "And I will not be the reason more of them fill up my dungeon."

"You are not thinking straight, Sire," Ilwat spat. "If we were prepared for another famine, the people would be eternally grateful for you when one came. They would praise your name in the streets for many years to come."

"Your name would be forever revered," Liano chimed in.

"That does not matter to me," Minearo said. "We are still recovering from the last famine and many of the farms are not strong enough to afford some of the taxes we have now."

"I beg you to think again, Sire," Ilwat replied.

"I thank you for your comments, sirs, and I will take your advice under consideration when I make my decision," Minearo said, though he had no thoughts of doing anything of the sort. "If it is all right with you, I would like to move on to a topic that I think bears more urgency than saving for a famine."

"What would that be, Sire?" That was Nuren, his most trusted of the Council. Granted, Nuren was not by any means what Minearo would consider honest, but he seemed to be the least self-serving of the Council, and that made him as close to a friend as Minearo could count.

"I want to talk about the resistance army that has been amassing in this city for much too long."

"That resistance force means nothing, Sire," Ilwat was talking down to him again. *He must learn I am not one to be trifled with.*

"There is rumor that more people are joining than ever before. They need to be dealt with before they become a risk."

"Your father never worried about them. They were never powerful enough to cause any real danger, other than starting a few fires in a few storage buildings around town, which we quickly put out," Ilwat said.

"And, with a small increase in taxes, those losses would not matter in the slightest, Sire," Liano pointed out.

"We wouldn't have to replace those lost supplies if there was no force to begin with," Minearo said.

"What are you proposing, Sire?" Nuren asked.

"I am proposing taking out that force, before they have the chance to become a danger to us."

"Your father—" Ilwat began.

"I am not my father," Minearo stated, slamming his hand on the table and standing up, "and I will not have you trying to make me into him."

"We would do no such thing, Sire," Ilwat said. Minearo thought with an inner smile that Ilwat looked a little bit like he was cowering. "I just wanted to point out that he didn't see them as dangerous enough for him to even bother finding. We were the ones who brought them to his attention so many years ago."

"They must be stopped. I have heard rumblings from Clearfy that more people have joined the force and are preparing to fight. I will not have this in my kingdom."

Ilwat looked around the table, his eyes huge and worried. "Wasn't Clearfy where old Teacher Alren lived?"

"We thought him dead," Anamer, another member of the Council said.

"He was Armat's mentor. Perhaps..."

"Perhaps what?" Minearo asked. "Who is Teacher Alren, and who is this Armat?"

"Armat and his father were our prisoners here many years ago. They were charged with conspiring to commit treason. Armat escaped, though we killed his father. We never heard from him again, nor could we really find him."

"If this Armat is in Clearfy with his teacher, he may be planning something. I aim to stop those plans before they can begin. This is my kingdom and I will do everything I can to save it," Minearo said.

"I advise against it still, Sire," Ilwat said. "They can do no harm to you as long as we are around."

"I do not want to risk anything, Ilwat."

"What do you plan to do, then?" Nuren asked.

"I want to send one of the Palace Guards, Manel, to see what he can find out, and then I will send a small force to dispose of Armat if it is true."

"What will you do with the rest of the group, then, Sire?" Ilwat asked.

"I assume that they will simply crumble when their leader is dead," Minearo said.

"I advise against it, Sire. I think we all do," Ilwat said. A murmur of agreement rang through the men.

"I understand, and I will take your thoughts under advisement when I make my decision. Thank you, sirs, for your time today. Now. I must go. There is much that requires my attention."

Before they could speak up to protest, Minearo left the room, closing the door behind him. He had a guard outside his door summon Manel to his chamber.

A little while later, Manel peered inside Minearo's chamber.

"Sire? You wanted to see me?" he said. He was staring at the floor and did not move a muscle until Minearo spoke.

"I did. Please, Manel. Come and sit. We have much to discuss." Minearo gestured to an empty chair.

"Thank you, Sire," Manel said, taking the offered seat. He was still staring at the floor and Minearo could see a small amount of sweat on his forehead. "What would you like to speak to me about?"

"I would like you to go on a small journey for me. There is a town a few days' journey from here called Clearfy. There is a man there, an old man, who we want you to watch.

(Days later)

A knock sounded at Minearo's door. It was the guard Elintio.

"Yes?" Minearo asked.

"Sire, the guard Manel is here to see you. He says he has some news to tell you."

"Let him in, please."

"Yes, Sire." Elintio opened the door and allowed Manel into the chamber.

"Manel, I hope you have something great for me. I have been waiting for a very long time," Minearo said warningly.

"I have much to tell you, Sire," Manel said. He was covered in dirt from the road and looked a little haggard. *What happened to him?*

"Then start." Minearo felt he had been waiting too long for news. *This had better be good. I do not enjoy waiting*, he thought.

"There are a total of six people living at the Teacher Alren's house. Three servants, Alren himself and two others. One is a man. His name is Armat, and he goes out of the house every day

early in the morning and only returns late at night. I followed him one day to a tavern and found him standing up and talking to the people eating. He wanted them to join his army, and said that he had found the Pleinta, and that they were ready to join the resistance force and gain the kingdom back for the people.”

“I knew it,” Minearo muttered. To Manel he said, “Go on.”

“I watched outside the Teacher Alren’s house for three days. I did not get to see the Pleinta, but there was definitely someone in the back of the house, and it seemed as though there was magic happening,” Manel said. “I beg your leave, Sire, for my appearance, but I did not leave Teacher Alren’s house for three days and hardly ate or drank during that time. I wanted to provide for you, Sire, a complete record.”

“How do you know that?” Minearo asked.

“I went to the back of his home, along a fence, and listened in. I heard a man, probably Alren, telling another person to move a rock, and then his voice got excited when it must have happened.”

“Who was the other person?”

“I did not get to see. They never left the house, and his fence was solid wood that I couldn’t see through.”

“That is OK. I thank you, Manel, for your service. But I must ask you now to not tell anyone what you have found or what you have done,” Minearo said.

“I will, Sire,” Manel said. “I thank you for this opportunity and I will not let you down.”

“Thank you, Manel. You may leave now. I am sure your family misses you,” Minearo said.

Manel bowed as he left the room and did not stop until the door closed.

"Do you think he will listen to you?" a voice from behind Minearo asked. Nuren stepped out of the shadows.

"I do not know, but I am having someone follow him for a while to make sure he listens," Minearo replied.

"That is most likely a good idea, Sire. What will you do now?"

"I want you to take a small force to Clearfy and kill Alren's household, including Armat and the so-called Pleinta. I want it to be quiet, which is why I am sending you," he said.

"As you wish, Sire," Nuren said, walking out of the chamber.

"One more thing. I want Manel to go with you. He will know what the people look like."

"Of course, sir," Nuren said.

"And make sure he knows to keep his mouth shut."

"Yes, Sire." The door closed. (23)

...

Today was one of the worst days I have ever experienced. I will write it here in the hopes that I never again have to remember all that has happened.

It started out great. Alren, Armat and I were about to start my lessons. Armat had taken the day off from recruiting so that he could see my progress so far. I couldn't wait to show him.

Just before we headed outside, Kilrem burst in, bleeding from somewhere on his arm. "Alren!" he shouted between heavy breaths.

"Kilrem. What is wrong?"

"In the city," he said between breaths, "there were men looking for you. They found me and grabbed me."

"What happened?" Alren asked. "Are you OK?"

"It is just a scratch, sir. I am OK. They are coming, though. They asked where you were and I said I didn't know who you were, like you told us to."

Alren nodded. "Let me fix your arm. Armat, please go grab some towels."

Armat turned to leave, but I said, "I can heal him, like you taught me to."

"That is a good idea. Come here and hold his arm. Kilrem, please continue," Alren said. Armat turned back into the room.

"They took me into an alley and kept asking me where you were. I kept saying that I didn't know you and that I was just at the market to get food for my family for the day, but he said he had seen me leaving your house and that he knew I was lying."

"Who said that?" Alren asked.

"One of the men in the group," Kilrem replied. "It sounded like he had been here before."

"I thought I saw someone watching us. I should have checked further," Alren said.

"Thank you, miss," Kilrem said as I finished healing his arm.

"Of course, Kilrem," I replied.

"Sir, they are coming here, for you. They are armed, all but one of them."

Armat looked at Alren.

"We knew this day might come. I should have been more careful as I went into town," he said.

"It is no use regretting what has already happened, Armat," Alren chided. "We must deal with the consequences."

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"We are going to prepare for what may come," Alren said. He turned to Kilrem. "Kilrem, please retrieve my sword and armor."

"At once, sir," Kilrem said with a bow.

"Mine are in my bedroom, if you could also grab that, Kilrem, please," Armat said.

"Yes, sir."

"I do not know how to fight," I said.

"It is something you need to learn, dear," Alren said. "Now is as good a time as any for that lesson, I assume."

"What should I do?" I asked.

"Let us plan our fight," Alren said. "I believe the best thing to do is to fight from inside this house. It is nigh impossible for anyone to come through those doors whom I do not invite in."

Armat nodded. Alren continued, "Heveni, I want you upstairs. You are most likely the one they are after most, and you are also the least experienced of all of us. Kilrem will stand guard outside your door. He has much battle experience."

I nodded. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Slow them down if they look like they are getting the upper hand. It Kilrem is right, there are more of them than there are us, and they sounded like they have much battle experience. We will need all the help we can get."

"I can do that," I said. I was terrified of even the idea of fighting, but coming up with ways to slow the men down gave my mind something else to think about and helped me get my mind off the approaching danger.

"Good," Alren said with a smile. "You have some experience slowing the enemy down. Treat these men like you did the juneli and you will be doing us all a great favor." He turned to Armat.

"You I want at the front door, with the rest of the servants. That is most likely where they will come in from, and you have the most battle experience of all of us. Station the three of you

however you see fit. I will post myself by the back door, in the kitchen. I would only slow you down in a fight.”

“Nonsense, Alren,” Armat said. “You were one of the best fighters who ever taught us.”

“That was many years ago. I am slow now, and I do not want you to be put in any more danger than you already are in.”

“If that is what you think is best, then I will agree,” Armat said.

“I do think this is the best option,” Alren said.

Kilren returned with Alren’s sword and armor and Armat’s sword. The other two servants in the house followed him in. They, like Kilrem, were now wearing hardened leather armor. It was nothing like the shining chain mail Alren began to don, but from the marks in the leather, it looked like it had worked for them before. One of them carried a sword and the other carried a bow and a large quiver of arrows.

“Lia, I want you upstairs, on the balcony, with those arrows,” Armat said. “Shoot them before they come to the door if you can.”

“Yes sir,” Lia said.

“Domel, you will be with me, fighting them if they come to the door.”

“As you wish, sir,” Domel said.

As Kilrem helped Alren put on his chain mail, Alren told him, “You are going to be stationed outside Heveni’s door. She is most likely the one they are most after, and she is the one we must protect above all. I have trusted you before and you have never let me down, Kilrem.”

“I will guard her with my life, sir,” Kilrem said with a smile toward me.

“I thank you, Kilrem, though I hope it does not come to that,” Alren said.

Armat, who had been peering out the window after he had gotten his sword, piped up. "There are men in armor approaching. It looks like they might be coming to the front."

"Take your places, then. We have no time to lose," Alren yelled.

Kilrem and I ran up the stairs. I ran into my room and shut the door. I heard it lock and heard Kilrem's footsteps pacing just outside it. I looked out the window, which faced the front of the house, and watched the men approach.

I remembered Alren's order for me to slow them down, so I closed my eyes as they turned onto the path that led to his house. There was really nowhere else they could be going except Alren's house, so I closed my eyes and concentrated. There were only four of them, though, and I thought Kilrem had said there were more than that.

I thought of quicksand forming on the road as they walked by and imagined them all getting stuck in it, and swallowed into the earth. I admit, I was angry. *How dare they come after me, when it is them that are in the wrong.* I kept thinking to myself. I forgot in the rush of energy that followed the anger that one of the rules was that I couldn't kill people with the magic. Still, I heard a shout of surprise and confusion and looked out the window to see one of the men stuck in a small puddle of what looked to be quicksand. His foot was sunk in to just before his knee and it was clear he was not going anywhere. An arrow through the heart took that man out as he struggled to free his leg. The arrow went clean through him. I saw Lia from my window. She was on the balcony connected to Alren's room, which also faced the front of the house.

She flung herself to the ground as a ball of fire shot toward her. It hit the balcony and exploded. I heard Lia crawl to the edge of the balcony and look over, aiming her bow for another shot. She shot arrow after arrow at the approaching men. One of the arrows found its home in a man's leg,

right through the thigh. He fell to the ground, yelling obscenities. It was clear, even from my vantage point, that it was only a matter of time before he was dead.

Suddenly, Lia's body appeared to spasm and then she fell to the ground, an arrow through her neck and burns on her face and hands. The arrow had come not from the approaching enemy that we had been focusing on, but from an unseen enemy off to the side who must have crept into place moments before. *I knew there had to be more of them*, I thought to myself.

I yelled and doubled my efforts to stop them.

They were very close to the house now, and I saw among them a man without armor muttering words. I didn't know who he was, but he had an air about him that suggested that he was dangerous. He walked just behind the other three, and though he had no armor Lia's arrows, many of which had been aimed at him, seemed to fall to his feet just before impact.

Kilrem popped his head into my chamber. "Alren says one of the men, the one with no armor, is a Hiltre. He says he is the reason they have so few men with them."

So few? I thought. This seems like so many. "Lia is dead," was all I could say in reply.

"She was a good fighter, but we are not prepared for a Hiltre," he said, looking down. "She will be greatly missed. Keep fighting, miss. All hope is not lost as long as we believe in ourselves."

Kilrem closed the door.

I heard a crash from downstairs and a yell from the back of the house. They must have reached the back door, then. I did not know what was going on there, and in my anger and fear seemed to have forgotten all I had been taught about magic. I needed to see what was going on.

I opened the door, saw Kilrem's surprised face, and told him, "I need to see what is going on to help. I do not want to sit idly by while people die to protect me."

"Very well, miss," Kilrem said. "I will be by your side wherever you go."

"Thank you, Kilrem," I said, putting a hand on his shoulder. He gave me a small smile, which I returned. Together we walked down the stairs and toward the kitchen. As we got closer, we heard more and more noise. I opened the door to the kitchen and saw a fierce scene unfolding in front of me.

Alren was squaring off with two men at once. One man lay dead or dying at his feet. Alren, though, was looking haggard and did not look like he could keep going for much longer.

I heard a crash that sounded like glass from the front of the house and a yell that sounded like it came from Armat. Armat told me afterward that they came in from the side windows and only the Hiltre came in through the front door. I heard the clash of swords and almost left to help Armat. Alren's yell of pain brought me back, though. He and now Kilrem as well were fighting the two men. The yell was the result of a large gash on Alren's arm. It looked shallow, just deep enough to bleed and hurt a lot, but not enough for him to be in danger.

I needed to help this fight end, that I might be able to help Armat. I sat in a dark corner where I felt out of the way and closed my eyes. Kilrem took his place in front of me, shielding me from sight for the most part. I took a deep breath to calm my nerves and thought. *I can't kill people, but Alren never said anything about knocking them out*, I realized. I imagined a pan lifting itself from the shelf and hitting one of the men on the head until he fell unconscious.

A large clang followed by a dull thump made me open my eyes. Only one of the men was still standing, and he was looking not at Alren or Kilrem, but at a pan floating in the air.

While he was distracted, Alren came up from behind him and stabbed him through the heart. He fell to the ground without another sound. I looked for Kilrem and found him finishing off the man who had fallen unconscious from the pan.

"Go help Armat," Alren shouted, bending over with a hand on the counter. The noise from the other room was overpowering "I think there is one more out there, and I will take care of him."

"Give me a second," I shouted back, closing my eyes. A yell sounded from outside. Grass had grown around the man outside, wrapping itself around his arms and legs. "You will find him in the grass," I told Alren with a smile. "He might be a little tied up, though."

"Thank you, my dear," Alren replied with a devious smile back.

I nodded and Kilrem and I headed back to the front of the house. As Kilrem opened the door to the common room, the scene unfolding before our eyes looked ugly. Domel was dead, laying near the window with blood trickling from his head. Armat was fighting the two remaining men in armor. The Hiltre was nowhere to be seen.

Kilrem jumped into the fight and together they took out one of the men. A hand grabbed me as I began to work to help them. I opened my eyes and to my horror, it was the Hiltre. I fought to get away, but his grasp was strong.

Armat left his battle with the final man to Kilrem. "Let her go, Nuren," he said, coming over to us.

The man, Nuren, did not say anything. I yelled and fought, kicking and punching him, but he kept his hold and began to drag me toward the door. I closed my eyes and imagined the house as a fortress, where no doors could open, no windows could break and no walls would fall. As we reached the door, he tried to open it, but it wouldn't budge. I opened my eyes and the windows had fixed themselves from where the men had originally come through.

Nuren said some words and suddenly I could not move. "Do not come closer, Armat, lest she come into some danger."

Armat stopped.

Nuren tried the door again, then the windows. When neither would budge, he spoke some words.

I felt an immense pressure in my head. "He's trying to break my magic!" I yelled to Armat.

"You must focus! Focus on nothing but keeping your magic going," he said calmly.

I focused all my effort and willpower onto maintaining the thoughts of the house as a fortress.

The pressure increased until it became an unbearable white light in my head. Then it eased. I opened my eyes slowly.

"She is good, this false Prophecy of yours," Nuren said. "It is too bad you both must die for this."

"You will do no such thing," Armat said.

"I believe I will," Nuren replied with a sickening smile. "After all, it seems as though we are trapped together in this house."

I still could not move and watched this exchange from my seat on the floor where Nuren had put me.

"You seem to miscount, Nuren. There are three of us and two of you."

"Four," Kilrem said, gesturing. The door to the kitchen was open and Alren, bloodstained but whole, walked through, "and one." Both men looked at Kilrem as the last of the enemy men slid from his sword.

"Thank you. Four of us and one of you. That does not look very good for you," Armat said with a smile.

Nuren pulled out a sword. "I will take my chances," he said.

He attacked Armat and Kilrem joined that fight. Alren was closing the gap between them when Nuren threw another ball of fire in his direction. It hit Alren square in the chest and sent him flying backward a few feet. He hit the wall, and fell to the ground motionless.

I yelled my defiance and closed my eyes. I imagined myself free from the bonds I was in. At first nothing happened, but I heard a grunt that sounded like Nuren, and felt the bonds loosen. I realized I didn't need to be free, though, to do anything, and stopped trying to free myself. The bonds immediately tightened. I closed my eyes and imagined a whirlwind surrounding Nuren. I imagined everything in the room flying around and hitting Nuren, so that he would become confused.

My hair slowly started blowing, at first subtly and then with more and more force. "Move out of the way!" I told Armat and Kilrem.

I heard Nuren make a surprised noise and opened my eyes to see him cowering in the midst of a small tornado of Alren's things flying around him.

While he was distracted, Armat snuck behind him. He looked at me and nodded. I imagined the room returning to normal. As soon as the whirlwind left, Alren ran Nuren through with his sword. Nuren fell to the ground and lay there, motionless.

"Look away," Armat said to me. He and Kilrem dragged the body to the door and they tried to open it. It didn't budge. "Heveni, can you open up the house, please?"

"Oh, sorry," I said. I closed my eyes and imagined openable doors and windows. I opened them as Kilrem and Armat drug Nuren's body outside. I heard a grunt of effort the men came back inside.

"It is done. He is dead."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"To make sure Hiltre are dead, they must be beheaded. I did not want you to see that."

"Thank you," I said. At the mere thought of that, my stomach was threatening to revolt.

Armat ran over to Alren's body. In the rush of things, I had forgotten temporarily about him.

We all ran to him, but it was too late. Already, his body was cold.

“What do we do now?” I asked.

“We bury the bodies of Alren and his household and burn the rest,” Armat said.

“What will we do them?” I asked.

“Nuren was a member of the King’s Council. Only the king himself can command them. We will go to the castle and take the kingdom back, in the name of Alren.” Armat looked at both of us.

There were tears in his eyes that threatened to run down his face, but his mouth was set in a grim determination.

“May I go along, sir? My life here is gone, without Alren. I will fight to protect you with my life.”

“Let us go, then, the three of us. Together we will make the king pay for his crimes.” (24)

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Explanations from each section:

1. This part is meant to show the main character as smart and brave. She is brave to leave her house as a young child, especially when she doesn't have a plan as to where she wants to go to live. She knows that she might die, but believes this to be a better future than the prospect of living at home forever, and continually being treated as a pox upon the family. She is smart because she takes those opportunities that are offered her, like the cottage, and capitalizes on them. She created a life out of nothing but a recently abandoned cottage and fields.
2. This is meant to show Alren as hopeless. He enters the tavern without any real thought that anybody will listen to him, and nobody does. The fact that he is drunk before he gives his speech is meant to show that he is hopeless, and tired of giving the same ill-fated speech time and again. Then, when he hears something that gives him hope, he sobers up and follows his instincts.
3. This part is meant to show the main character as being very independent and wary of strangers. She does not feel comfortable when Armat goes to her house, especially because he is brought by her own sister makes her feel betrayed. The main character is also very untrusting of others, which is why she requires Armat to show her what he is talking about, and even then she does not completely believe him.
4. This is meant to show the main character as strong and crafty. Though she does not know much about the magic that she has in her, she decides to give it a try to help the mentor, because she knows that otherwise she cannot help in the battle. She is also shown again as brave, as she was unable to run away from the fight and leave Armat to die alone.

5. This part is meant to show Armat's worry for her, as well as her strength. She refuses to show weakness in front of him and instead fights an inner battle with herself to continue walking. It is also notable here that the journal entries stop for the rest of the journey. This is to show, as will be revealed later, that she is too tired and worn out at the end of each night to write about her day. Armat does not regret taking her away from her home, but he feels bad that he is putting her through such a difficult time.
6. This is meant to show Armat as a storyteller, and a good one. It is also meant to show him being wise in regards to the history of the land as well as angry at what happened to it. The other goal of this part is to spell out the main parts of the reason for this journey and spell out the main reasons for it, so the reader can decide about his motives for using her to overthrow the government. The story reenergizes the main character slightly, so she does not dread the next morning or the remainder of their journey as much.
7. This part is meant to the main character's gratefulness for the simple things, like a bed. She has been on the road, thoroughly unprepared for such a hard journey, for a long time and is simply happy for the smaller things in life. It is also meant to show Armat as a guardian over Heveni, a job which he sometimes takes too far. Heveni sometimes feels a little suffocated in her journey with Armat, and feels a little like he treats her like a child. This part is also meant to show how innocent Heveni is, though she tries to portray herself as older than she is, she does not quite understand the possible outcome had only one room been requested.
8. This part is meant to show Armat's hatred for the king and his policies. He is world weary and dead set on fixing the wrongs he sees. He is generous to those he comes into

contact with, from the innkeeper to the store owner, as he recognizes that they are struggling, as is everyone, and it is not their fault.

9. This part shows the beginnings of Heveni's coming into her own power. She is unsure and uncomfortable trying to heal the child, because she does not know what she is doing, and she is still not quite convinced of her own strength. Armat here is also meant to be shown as a patient teacher, who walks with Heveni the whole way. He is also meant to be shown as wise, in that he does not have the magic Heveni has, but he still knows how she should go about trying to heal Hindra.
10. This part is meant to confirm that Armat is in hiding. He is worried about the word getting out about Heveni healing Hindra and that word getting back to the king, who is after him. He does not want to alarm Heveni by leaving immediately, but he feels that they are not safe and must make a quick escape. He is also a little afraid of Heveni's power because of the earlier display and how quick it was, but he tries to hide that fact from her.
11. This part is meant to show Heveni as tough, or trying to be. She is very untrained and unprepared for such a long journey, but she feels the importance of what she and Armat are doing and does not want to impede their progress on their journey to the capital. Armat's relationship with Heveni is meant to be that of a father-daughter. He watches out for her and worries over her, occasionally to the point where she gets annoyed.
12. Alren looks, to Heveni, at first impression to be stern and angry. When he talks to her, though, she finds him to be nice, if a little gruff. She is awed by the grandeur of his house

and wishes to explore. She again is grateful for the small things, like a bed and a bath, and is very curious about Alren.

13. This is meant to show the father-son relationship between Armat and Alren. Armat plays the part of the son desperate to please his father, and Alren plays the role of the stern father. This makes Heveni temporarily fear him, especially after his angry outburst toward Armat when Alren heard about Heveni healing the little girl. Heveni is confused by his gruff yet gentle approach toward her and Armat.
14. Heveni is shown here to be shy, and the house servants as welcoming and nice to her, as they try to make her comfortable in their home. She is still confused when people treat her kindly, since she is not used to it, and does not know how to react.
15. Armat's relationship with Alren is meant to be seen as father-son. Armat comes to Alren trying to impress him, and the impression is that this is not the first time that this has happened. Alren is also in hiding and feels comfortable where he is, which is why he worries when Armat comes with a stranger in tow. But Alren has to believe Armat's story when Heveni's story of her life lines up perfectly with the prophecy.
16. This part is meant to show the prince and the king as two very different people. The king is old and experienced, formal and very regal. The prince, though, lives very much inside his own head and has no experience running the very kingdom he will soon run. The prince lives in his own world, which is why his thoughts are more present than his actual dialogue. He does not enjoy the formalities his father insists upon and chooses instead to live a life primarily inside his own head.

17. This is the main character's revelation about her fate, and her failed first attempt at learning how to control the magic she has inside her. It is also to show Alren's teaching style as gruff and impatient, in order to contrast the patience and kindness he initially showed her. This is to highlight the time crunch surrounding the revolution.
18. This part is meant to show Heveni's success at last with magic, as well as Alren's gruff method of teaching. He does not pull any punches and Heveni does not want to work under him. Finally, when she is successful, he is proud of her and more fatherly toward her afterward. She worries initially when she is very tired afterward, but is reassured when Alren tells her that that will fade with practice and experience.
19. This part is meant to show Minearo's love for his father, which he hides because of his father's cold and formal attitude toward him. He is stoic when he gets the news of his father's death, but knows that he does not have time to properly grieve. Thus, he takes a few minutes for himself before assuming the position of king. He is confused by the news, but knows that he was also in denial that his father was dying because he does not and is not prepared to lead a kingdom.
20. This part is meant to show Alren as a much gentler teacher toward Heveni. After she initially found success with magic, he now believes in Armat's theory more and treats her more like a star student instead of a class clown. He believes in her and wants to help her. He is a wise and knowledgeable teacher and helps her every step of the way to the best of his ability. Heveni is also beginning to become confident in her abilities, and feels more comfortable in her position.

21. This part is meant to show Heveni's success with magic, and how quickly she picks up the magic. She loves Alren and living at his house, with its freedoms and the things she gets to learn. She is becoming comfortable in the short time she and Armat have been living with Alren and worries about when it may be time for them to leave.
22. This part is to reiterate the idea that Alren and Armat see Heveni as a child, or at least part of them sees her that way. It is also meant to reiterate the idea that she wants to be respected as someone who is older, and almost an equal, to Armat and Alren. Armat has also begun to take the dog with him, to show what Heveni can do in a way that is actual and not theoretical, and causes more people to believe what he is saying.
23. This part is meant to show Minearo as the type of person who is desperately trying to get out from under his father's shadow. He wants to be known as his own person, and he actually wants what is best for the people in his kingdom. He wants to fight against his Council, but not in a way that will end in death like his father. He is strong, and willing to go behind the Council's back to do what he thinks is best. He is, though, still immature in the idea that he still is partly doing what he does to prove himself different than his father.
24. This part is meant to show Heveni as a strong fighter, and to set the basis for a second book, or a second part, where Alren is angry and maybe a little reckless because the king has caused the death of his dear friend and father figure. It is also meant to show Heveni as crafty, when she works her magic. She comes up with new ways to help out with her magic, and it ends up working and being helpful to the cause.